

OLIVER CROMWELL.



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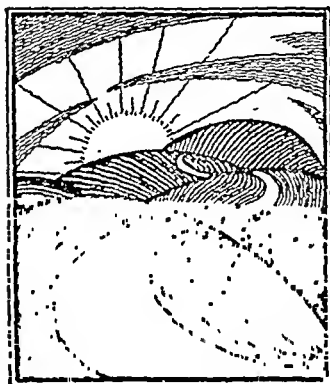
OLIVER CROMWELL

THE
ROADMAKER
SERIES

OLIVER CROMWELL

(1599-1658)

By
ANDREW DAKERS



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By the Same Author

ROBERT BURNS

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INTRODUCTORY

WHEN all the little critics have fulfilled their noble function, when all the nibblers at the loose threads of the mantle of the great have worn their teeth to the gums, the figure of Oliver Cromwell, challenging and aloof, remains undisturbed by their busy exertions. Contradictions, inconsistencies this man had, but they were to his character what the warts were to his countenance. He stands beyond question or dispute a man of destiny whose name is cut deep and large into the tablet of Britain's Imperial greatness.

The spectacle of this small landowner, occupied with the ordinary business of his class, earnestly fulfilling himself as husband and father in the depths of the English country ; a stranger to great affairs, unimportantly acquainted with political life as an almost unheard member of two Parliaments, suddenly emerging from his relative obscurity into the forefront of affairs of far-reaching national consequence—this spectacle is scarcely to be matched in human history.

At the age of forty-two—when many men

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are looking towards partial retirement—Cromwell, who believes that public service is the end to which men are born, discovers himself committed to tasks and paths which are to test his ideal to the uttermost. From that moment when the urgency of the crisis confronting England becomes clear to him, personal considerations sink to matters of secondary interest so long as life shall last.

Doubtless able to use a sword, but otherwise ignorant of warfare except such rudiments as he may have learnt from his Bible, middle-aged Oliver Cromwell rises in a few short years to the pre-eminent position in the Army, and on his unconscious way to that high station earns for himself the title of the greatest cavalry leader that English history had known. Spurning all credit for himself in the achievements of this amazing military career, in which he never learnt what it was to be defeated, he insisted that only God should have the glory, yes, even for the massacres of Drogheda and Wexford.

A strange man this, possessed, as it were with a consciousness of divine selection for the task that fell to his hand. History has gaped in wonder and frowned in puzzlement at his strange diversity, at his incredible tenderness and his inexcusable harshness, his vaunting

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self-assurance and his painful self-debasement : so that many have cried out in bewilderment, asking how such a character can claim the virtue of sincerity. . . .

And when the campaigning was over, the King beheaded and Worcester fought and won, the chief of the Army becomes the first person of the State, dissolves and calls Parliaments, makes ordinances, works for the settlement of the Three Kingdoms, encourages the perfection of the Navy, enforces respect for England abroad, champions the Protestant cause whenever opportunity offers, and seeks to establish some measure of religious tolerance, while turning an adamant front against Rome ; and when his supporters would have him accept the title of King, he has the courage not to turn swiftly from the temptation, but considers their proposal with prayerful zeal concerned only with the problem whether the Commonwealth will be better served by his acceptance or rejection.

Through all this period of responsibilities of almost unendurable intensity there accompanies him the consciousness that his enemies seek to slay him, suborning knaves and assassins to that end. Weary he is often, aching with the longing to hand over the continuance of office to whoever is able and willing to take it on.

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But there is no one but himself to do the work, no other shoulders are broad enough to carry England upon them during this interregnum between feudal and constitutional monarchy. From first to last a man of intensest religious conviction, scarcely daring to commit a thought or act without first having consulted his God as to its rightness, defying himself or any man to dispute the decision of his inspiration, relying upon his individual interpretation of the will of God, sure in his soul of his rightness, so that he feared not to teach the Scots the meaning of the Word of God.

He was the incarnation of the new spirit of his age, a spirit whose strength was established in the open pages of the Bible and whose weakness derived from the faulty interpretation of the Word of God. The literal truth of the scriptures was unchallenged and its symbolism almost unsuspected by the Puritans : their strength was their weakness and their weakness their strength. Literalism makes for single-mindedness, which is a near neighbour of narrowness.

In speech and action Cromwell is revealed in his public life as an Old Testament Christian, a kind of Peter, eager to cut off the ear of anything connected with the Roman Catholic faith, or of any other enemy of those whom he

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believes to be the people of God. He fought his battles under the eye of Jehovah, his head ringing with Psalms, his battle-cry : " The Lord of Hosts ! "

Non-resistance, turning the other cheek, this attitude towards oppression was unknown to his mind and repugnant to his spirit : the meekness of the Christians was a virtue that Cromwell reserved to exercise in the presence of his Maker and not in the presence of the tyranny of man or king. The majestic imagery of the Old Testament, the puissant combativeness of the Israelite kings laid a singularly fast hold upon the imaginations of the Puritan sections of the people ; and its members listened with fear to the fulminations of the wisest King against the snares of the fleshly appetites. The free indulgence of the social virtues which, in the Elizabethan heyday, had been but the expression of a full and fearless love of life, a respite from hard action and harder thinking, this had become an end in itself seducing men and women from the straight way of useful living.

Puritanism in its gospel of social asceticism was nothing more than a natural reaction from this excess, carried swiftly to extremes. The senses became the unruly menace to a godly life ; everything of sensuous appeal, whether

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a statue of the Madonna, an exquisite church window or an alluring woman, took on the nature of things to be shunned and destroyed. Alongside this moral attitude to life in general, there had grown up a fierce consciousness of the rights and liberty of individual man. The advocates of personal repression were also the inveterate opponents of oppression by persons. The Puritans held that the rights of commoners were as inviolable as the privileges of kings.

Tough-textured men of inflexible will and high moral fibre endured for a time, but never in their hearts submitted to, the inroads upon their rights made by the reactionary Stuarts. The smouldering fire of the resentment they damped down with their English love of peace and hatred of scenes, hoping in the manner of their race that things would arrange themselves before extreme action became inevitable. These men watched with growing dismay the power exercised by the Roman Catholics at Court, deriving from the Queen herself their temerity to tamper with the new-won freedom from the thralldom of Rome ; and they observed also, doubtless with some stern pity in their hearts, her infatuated royal husband refraining from fulfilling his duty as a Protestant champion.

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Ship Money, the control of the militia, the attempted seizure of the Five Members, these things were but accidental causes of the great revolt against the anachronistic continuance of absolute monarchy. The temper of the people was such that any overt invasion of their rights would have stimulated disaffection of thought into active rebellion. Man's consciousness of his divinity had achieved a new expansion, his horizon had extended, and now had come the will to enter into possession of this new domain.

In the vibrating reality of this state of national consciousness, among these men dwelling spiritually in this state, Oliver Cromwell grew to manhood and middle-age. He was fortunate in possessing such material, spiritual and human, for the purposes of the high services which he believed to be his to render to his country and the kingdom of the godly. His Ironsides were but the apex of a pyramid of resolute and exasperated Englishmen. And when an Englishman takes the trouble to be exasperated he is irresistible. It is not the least of Cromwell's achievements that he was able to secure unity of action in the large sense, among a body of men, the majority of whom were bigots in thought and action of an extremity that he never approached.

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It is not unreasonable to propose that had the majority of the influential Parliamentary leaders had Cromwell's patience and understanding, King Charles had never died upon the scaffold, but at worst in exile. This may become clearer when his part in that timeless tragedy comes to be examined. Personally he reveals a similar temperance of outlook and action : he was never the extreme Puritan as that name has come to be interpreted to-day. Extreme things he did, extreme utterances he gave voice to, but always and only under the compulsion of some temporary circumstance. He believed in the use of wine to the point of scorning those who feared it, even to cock-fighting and horse-racing he had no objection ; he believed in the enjoyment of the lighter things of life, objecting only when they were made the end instead of mere incidents of living.

In this study Oliver Cromwell is regarded as the man who was successful in consolidating England during the most difficult period of her political history, as the one who succeeded in building a sleeper-road, at least, by which the chariot of state managed to cross the morass which threatened to engulf it on its journey from absolute or feudal monarchy to constitutional kingship.

BOOK ONE

CHARACTERISTICS

OLIVER CROMWELL

CHAPTER ONE

THE few contemporary pen-portraits of Oliver Cromwell which survive in the writings of the times are of no serious value, as they are either dull and lifeless or marred by bias on one side or the other. It is, nevertheless, not quite impossible to arrive at a real impression of the man from his personal writings and his acts.

His portraits show him to have been physically a man of superficially unattractive countenance, apt to be introspective, indwelling, rather than concerned with externals. Strength, purposefulness, characterise the expression of his face, and one has a strange feeling that he is always facing one, never turning his back. His countenance is marked with the lineaments of the brooder, spiritual and mental suffering has bitten its story round his mouth and eyes. . . . But, after all, the physical appearance of such a man is of but faint interest : most

often it masks rather than reveals the reality of the spirit which it encases.

Cromwell's early life gave no indication of the capacity he was later to disclose as a leader and governor of men. He was born on April 25, 1599, of parents who were gentlefolk in Huntingdon, and hereditists have found it interesting to speculate upon the rather distant paternal relationship with Thomas Cromwell, who so assiduously served Henry VIII. in his suppression of the monks. There is, perhaps, at least plausibility in the theory that Oliver's distaste for the ritualists was a trait derived from this ancestral strain. The boy who grew up as the only surviving son of a family of ten children, and who went, in due course, to the public school in Huntingdon, was quite unconscious of any urge to continue the work of his famous ancestor, although his schoolmaster stimulated the spirit of religious fanaticism in the pupil. Strong Puritan influences were also brought to bear upon him when in 1616, on St. George's Day, he went to the Sidney Sussex College at Cambridge. A little more than a year later his father's death cut short his scholastic career, during which he had shown little evidence of achieving distinction in learning, or of being perturbed when his

heavy bereavement put a term to his studies. It is probable, though not too certain, that he read a little law at Lincoln's Inn. He lived with his mother, managing the modest family estate and, in his twenty-second year, married Elizabeth Bouchier, daughter of a well-to-do London merchant. For eleven years thereafter he pursued the vocations of a country gentleman, and in 1628 was chosen to represent Huntingdon in Parliament, in which capacity he seems to have made but one speech. In 1631, two years after the dissolution of Parliament, he sold his Huntingdon properties, and removed to a grazing farm at St. Ives. Five years later he made his last change of residence, before going up to London in 1647, by removing to Ely with his mother and unmarried sisters to share the house with him and his own family, which numbered nine children. His eldest son died in 1639. He was always occupied, though not predominantly, in the public affairs of the districts in which he lived ; but until the outbreak of the Civil War, he lived the placid and evenly prosperous life of an average English country gentleman.

From contemporary history one gathers little of any significance in the way of pictures of Cromwell in the visible process of carrying

through his mighty performances either in debate or on the battlefield. Seldom has a great personality escaped the tattle of the gossips so effectively as he ; with few exceptions the paragraphists left him alone or found him material of too sterling a quality on which to exercise their limitations. His voice was unmusical and his oratory was as lacking in elegance as was his appearance. It is a fact rather than a virtue that he was more or less indifferent to outward appearances, so long as he could claim to be a private individual, although, when he became Lord Protector, he suffered himself to endure, if not to enjoy, the external trappings which he knew to be necessary to all in such a place of dignity and observation. In the general sense he was cast in in the mould of the average Englishman of his period and used no artifice to differentiate himself from that model. The fire of his temperament was not the swift Celtic kind, but of the slow-burning sort capable of blazing when great heat of speech or action was needed.

The qualities that enabled him to take the part he filled were of the spirit rather than of the mind. His shining sincerity, his unswerving fidelity, these alone were accountable for his arriving—without conscious effort towards

such an end—at that exalted station of personal head of the State.

The credulity of the human race, giving men a capacity for accepting statements based upon a kind of mental jugglery which passes for logic, has led to a certain acceptation being accorded to assertions that Cromwell was a self-seeking iconoclast from the moment he entered public life, until he left it through the gateway of death. That it is impossible to make out a case to prove such a statement does not affect the sincerity with which it is believed.

The fact is that Cromwell was not what is termed a lovable man, and when certain isolated actions of his are torn from the context of his life and given undue prominence he becomes an easy man for the indiscriminating to hate, and for the intellectually indolent to belittle. The very height of his selflessness has resulted in a doubt of its reality. So many have, in both small and great endeavours, some hidden or overt personal end or aim to serve, that for most it is difficult to conceive a soul so fine as to live such a life as Cromwell lived for the sake of an abstract ideal alone. In the same manner as he ignored his own comfort and desires of the human kind he also ignored those of his friends and enemies alike.

Two things Cromwell sought—unchallenged sanctuary for men in the presence of their God, and the safety of the English realm. If it be objected that he denied tolerance to those of the Roman Catholic faith, the answer is that that church sought to use its spiritual strength to dominate in secular ways the temporal world, to usurp the province of Government. Rightly or wrongly the majority of Englishmen did not desire to be so dominated, and Cromwell's finger was on the pulse of his country.

Cromwell and his character are not to be understood unless the fact is appreciated that he was convinced that his life was consecrated to the interwoven causes of England and Protestantism. His controlling dæmon was this consciousness of divine selection and inspiration, and as far as one can judge he never gave voice to a thought or pursued a course of action without having first communed with his God. He obeyed, without thought of self, every prompting from that source, and when no prompting came he usually avoided decision lest such decision should not be of God. A perusal of his letters and speeches and a study of his career leave no possibility for doubting the utter sincerity of his attitude. It may be, as some sceptics hold, that he was under a

partial or complete delusion in harbouring such a conviction, but the fact remains that, lacking that assurance, Oliver Cromwell had never won a battle nor held in check the vagaries of a rampant nation.

His reverence for life was exalted and he expressed that reverence in conduct and action as well as in word and thought. He contended that the end to which men were born was public service, which was his way of interpreting the new commandment to love one's neighbour as one's self. It was not a positive virtue in his view to perform an act of public utility ; it was an obvious duty, the only justification of life. Fame and great place he regarded and used as powerful instruments for the nation's good, never as opportunity for personal gratification or aggrandisement.

Cromwell's belief in Almighty God's special interest in him as the means of bringing about the great work to which the people of England had set their hands was as unwavering as the sun's rays. It might be said that this thing in his soul transcended belief and had become knowledge from that time when he first experienced visions of a clearness that convinces one of their utter reality to the man who saw them. One may search history for a declaration

by a man of action to match that in which Cromwell, in a letter to some now unknown correspondent, wrote of the foundation of the faith that was in him for "our Great Cause!"

"Verily I do think the Lord is with me! I do undertake strange things, yet do I go through with them, to great profit and gladness, and furtherance of the Lord's great Work. I do feel myself lifted up by a strange force, I cannot tell why. By night and by day I am urged forward on the great Work. As sure as God appeared to Joseph in a dream, also to Jacob, He has also directed . . . (some words missing in original letter). . . . Therefore I shall not fear what man can do unto me. I feel that he giveth me the light to see the great darkness that surrounds us at noonday."

Although the precise words are missing, one can guess without fear of real error what the direction was that he received in his vision. And it is significant that this letter is dated as early as July 1642, when the great work of subduing stubborn monarchy was in its infancy of action. Otherwise, if these visions had come to him when he had already attained high place, and achieved great things, the cynics and sceptics would have a reasonable premiss on which to base their contention that this divine

inspiration was all delusion, a self-induced assurance of election awakened by a desire to escape vanity. The man who penned those words cannot have been a vague-minded visionary in the ordinary connotation of that word, for in the next paragraph we find him writing : " I have sent you 300 more carbines, and 600 snaphances ; also 300 lances, which when complete I shall send down by the wain with 16 barrels of powder. We declare ourselves now, and raise an army forthwith : Essex and Bedford are our men. Throw off fear, as I shall be with you." Therein speaks the man of action who knows from within his own importance in the work which lies before Parliament. Even if he were not actually consecrated for the work, as he believed and knew, it was a fortunate thing for England and its liberties that this conviction dominated the man who was to become their Protector.

This conviction that God was definitely on the side of the Parliamentarians persisted even when Parliament had become nothing more than a body of the nominees of the army chiefs who permitted Cromwell to be the figurehead of their power. The Little Parliament of Puritan Notables was a purely one-party representation called out of a pious hope by a

and every word of Cromwell's to like effect, but one of his most revealing utterances may serve to conclude the series of extracts from his words which bear upon his consciousness of divine calling. It occurs in the speech with which he dissolved his first Protectorate Parliament, in the course of a passage in which he was discussing the inspiration of the great Cause to which he had devoted himself. "It is either of God or of man. If it be of man, I would I had never touched it with a finger. If I had not had a hope fixed in me that this Cause and this Business was of God, I would many years ago have run from it."

There is subtle danger in this kind of certitude of divine appointment, as there is danger in every sort of fanaticism. In a man of less robust character or of less sound mind—in the leaders of the Levellers and such offshoots of the Puritan movement—Cromwell's sense of inspired direction could have led to national disasters of a magnitude taxing the bounds of imagination and conjecture. The force that dwelt within him was of such immense potency that it could scarcely have been employed with safety unless he had revered it, as in effect he did, as an impersonal trust to be applied only to the highest ends within his comprehension.

It would seem that Cromwell went in terror of receiving any personal credit for the work he did or the successes he achieved. Times that it would be wearisome to enumerate he insists that to God alone must gratitude and praise be given : every victory is a marvellous great mercy from God, every failure he sees as a cause for searching his and other hearts to discover where they have gone contrary to God's will. He spent his public life in a crusade convinced that he was an instrument in the very hand of the Almighty. The instrument was effective because of the hand that held it, and not from any virtue in itself ; and it is a measure of the intrinsic greatness of this man that his humility increased with his success. In spite of a natural temptation to doubt the sincerity of his allusions to himself in terms of " miserable worms," it becomes impossible when reviewing his character and its manifestations as a whole to yield to that temptation.

His self-abasement was as genuine as his belief that he was divinely called, and any doubt as to the sincerity of his humble attitude disappears when one realises that his standard of self-judgment was an ideal spiritual man of a purity and integrity beyond the attainment of ordinary humanity. He was not unduly humble

CHAPTER TWO

IT was not only from the pens of historical commentators and biographers that Cromwell had to meet the ludicrous charge of using for personal ends the high place and power which he had won by being himself. During his own day the small-souled and the envious were busy with their tongues decrying him for a mean self-seeker, and his retorts to them have a quality of scorn rather than of anger which reveals to the reader how incredible he found such an attitude of mind. To do public work with private ends in view was an achievement utterly beyond the capacity of this man : for his private end was to do the public work.

Unless Cromwell was a continuous liar as well as a hypocrite there can be no justification for doubting that he entered into public life and remained in it only because he believed himself called to it, and that what benefits and wealth or power came to him were forced upon him, without his seeking. His continuance in authority after the wars had ended at Worcester was not only not of his desiring, but of his personal hopes and expectations.

There is sincerity in the words in which he stated his position to a somewhat hostile Parliament, his first as Protector :

“ And when, I say, God had put an end to our wars, or at least brought them to a very hopeful issue, very near an end,—after Worcester fight,—I came up to London to pay my service and duty to the Parliament which then sat : hoping that all minds would have been disposed to answer what seemed to be the mind of God, especially to those who had bled more than others in carrying on of the military affairs,—I was much disappointed of my expectation. For the issue did not prove so. Whatever may be boasted or misrepresented, it was not so, not so ! . . . The thing I drive at is this, I say to you, I hoped to have had leave, ‘ for my own part,’ to retire to a private life. I begged to be dismissed of my charge ; I begged it again and again ; and God be my judge between me and all men if I lie in this matter ! That I lie not in matter of fact is known to very many : but whether I tell a lie in my heart, as labouring to represent to you what was not upon my heart, I say the Lord be my Judge, let uncharitable men, who measure others by themselves, judge as they please.”

The same ring of unquestionable truth that sounds in the foregoing words is eloquent in that rather pathetic utterance in his last speech

to any Parliament : " I can say in the presence of God, in comparison with whom we are but like poor creeping ants upon the earth—I would have been glad to have lived under my woodside, to have kept a flock of sheep rather than undertaken such a Government as this. But undertaking it by the Advice and Petition of you, I did look that you who had offered it unto me should make it good."

There was another occasion when he felt moved to rebut the unworthy accusation that the Lord Protector would make himself great and his family great, and to that end was making necessities that entailed the voting of supplies. He spoke in the presence of all who knew him and his record, and he feared not to say : "This were something hard indeed. But I have not yet known what it is to 'make necessities,' whatsoever the thoughts or judgments of men are. And I say this, not only to this Assembly, but to the world, that the man liveth not who can come to me and charge me with having, in these great Revolutions, 'made necessities.' I challenge even all that fear God."

To conclude the documentation, the purpose of which is to let Cromwell speak for himself, without any intervention of the interpretative spirit, regarding his attitude towards his life

and work, the following may serve : “ If I have any peculiar interest which is personal to myself, which is not subservient to the Public end—it were not an extravagant thing for me to curse myself : because I know God will curse me, if I have.”

This note of disinterestedness is implicit in all his words and actions, and if he does appear to protest too much it is because he was a mark for all the volubly envious and antagonistic. The vigour with which he spoke was, if one takes his words in relation to his character as a whole, an effect of pain that his motives should be seriously doubted when all the facts were there to prove the doubt unreal. The one touch of selfishness that Cromwell revealed in the course of his career was in his admitted desire to retire from public life after he had brought the Parliamentary forces to complete victory. He was temperamentally a man of action, and the atmosphere of political life was repugnant to him : he also had in his heart the consciousness of a hard and heavy task carried to a conclusion through periods of doubt, anxiety and ill-health, and his expectation of retirement was natural, rather than a tendency of conscious self-interest.

It would seem that he was surprised and not

a little scared when the Army leaders insisted that he must take the headship of the State upon himself. He submitted to their wishes—to avoid the harder work word of dictation—not out of any desire to add civilian honours to the military distinctions he had achieved, but because he believed that he could not escape the compulsion of this new command from God, supported by the will of the English people.

To give instances of Cromwell's carelessness of self in the field and during the rigours of campaigning would be to humiliate the spirit of English history. His indifference to danger and personal hardship makes a shining page in annals not empty of the records of valiant men.

And if any are not convinced by his own words on the question of his lack of interest in selfish ends, one must ask : what personal benefits he acquired by means of his mythical self-aggrandisement? Parliament voted him certain lands and an income which increased with his services to the nation, to which, as rewards, he showed himself indifferent. One thousand pounds per annum of an income of which such a sum was more than a tithe, he gave back to the nation towards the prosecution of the Irish war for five years if it should last so long. Beyond these Parliamentary votes, which

occurred by routine of such matters and not as distinctive treatment which he might have influenced, he took no advantage of his success and power, except to allow himself to be housed and garbed in a fashion befitting the rank to which the Army and the course of events had exalted him.

His capacity for securing the ends which he desired is not questioned, and therefore it becomes inexplicable that he should have failed so lamentably to obtain the very simply achievable personal ones which have existed so long in the minds of his detractors. Oliver Cromwell had his flaws, but a dispassionate reading of history does not allow selfishness to be catalogued among them.

He did not realise God as the loving Father with an infinite capacity for forgiveness and a repugnance for punishment ; he was obsessed by the current idea that the Jehovahian revelation of God was identical with the Father of Jesus Christ. It was not understood yet that the God of Battles could not be the Father of the Prince of Peace. These limitations of understanding were, it may be, necessary at that point in history. They explain, at any rate, certain otherwise inexplicable sayings and doings of Cromwell.

The private life of Cromwell was unbrokenly dominated by religion and he strove through all his years towards the saintly ideal of conduct and thought. The benefits which accrue from fervent prayer were his in full measure, and it may be said that he sought always to live as if in the actual presence of God. His creed was a simple one, deriving from the belief that the Bible was the word of God, conveying literally and understandably a single divine meaning. There was no esoteric interpretation possible in his view, and he was undoubtedly one of those who were filled with a great joy in the possession of the scriptures. This certainty of the simplicity of obtaining the sure means of divine grace, with the consequent assurance

that there was but one meaning to be derived from it, resulted in a certain spiritual arrogance.

This confidence of rightness shows itself in the lengthy discussion he had with the Edinburgh divines, when he said without qualification : " Indeed you do err through mistaking the scriptures " ; and again in a letter to Lord Wharton in which he wrote, on the eve of the Battle of Worcester : " In my very heart : Your Lordship, Dick Norton, Tom Westrow, Robert Hammond have, though not intentionally, helped one another to stumble at the dispensations of God, and to reason yourselves out of His service."

There is a strange confusion discoverable in the mind of Cromwell, of which he himself seems to have been utterly unaware. The manner of his prosecution of the Civil Wars was that of one who clung to the Old Testament law of " an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," the law of force. At the same time he claimed that it was a right knowledge of the Gospel that led men to fight for the Parliament.

" In other things, God hath put the sword in the Parliament's hands,—for the terror of evildoers, and the praise of them that do well. If any plead exemption from that,—he knows not the Gospel : if any would wring that out

less controlled in this regard. The intellect not consciously guided by the apparent principles of the Bible was, to him, of no avail for the attainment of any high end, such as the settlement of the distracted nations. He was to learn before the end that it was not sufficient qualification for the business of government that men should fear God and be of approved fidelity and honesty, which were the qualities, by virtue of which the members of the Little Parliament was nominated. This noble, but ill-advised experiment failed. His allusions to this failure betray a certain puzzlement that such men as he had chosen should have proved so humanly imperfect when faced with the practical affairs, which to him seemed so simple a matter to direct. It was probably the greatest disappointment, and the hardest lesson of his whole career, to have it proved by the event that the Puritan virtues did not of themselves fit a man for high public service.

It is curious to note that, although he held the view referred to, he was strongly opposed to ministers of religion "meddling with worldly policies." It is true that the ministers particularly addressed were Scottish, and not orthodox Puritans, but it is clear from the following

quotation that he is stating a principle applicable generally to all preachers of the Gospel. In a letter to the Speaker of the Houses of Parliament, the day after the victory of Dunbar, he writes :

“ Since we came to Scotland, it hath been our desire and longing to have avoided blood in this business ; by reason that God hath a people here fearing His name, though deceived. And to that end have we offered much love unto such, in the bowels of Christ ; and concerning the truth of our hearts therein, have we appealed unto the Lord. The Ministers of Scotland have hindered the passage of these things to the hearts of those to whom we intended them. And now we hear, that not only the deceived people, but some of the ministers are also fallen in this battle. This is the great hand of the Lord, and worthy of the consideration of all those who take into their hands the instruments of a foolish shepherd,—to wit, meddling with worldly policies, and mixtures of earthly power, to set up that which they call the Kingdom of Christ, which is neither it, nor, if it were it, would such means be found effectual to that end,—and neglect, or trust not to, the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit ; which is alone powerful and able for the setting up of that Kingdom ; and when trusted to, will be found effectually able to that end, and will also do it ! ”

forms :—it is a debt due to God and Christ ; and He will require it, if that Christian may not enjoy his liberty. If a man of one form will be trampling on the heels of another form ; if an Independent, for example, will despise him who is under Baptism, and will revile him, and reproach him and provoke him,—I will not suffer it in him.”

Three months after this speech he retorted to a complaint by Cardinal Mazarin as follows :

“ I believe that under my Government your Eminency, in the behalf of Catholics, has less reason for complaint as to the rigour upon men’s consciences than under the Parliament. For I have of some, and these very many, had compassion ; making a difference. Truly I have (and I speak it with cheerfulness in the presence of God, who is a witness within me to the truth of what I affirm) made a difference ; and, as Jude speaks, “ plucked many out of the fire,” —the raging fire of persecution, which did tyrannise over their consciences, and encroached by an arbitrariness of power upon their estates. And herein it is my purpose, as soon as I can remove impediments, and some weights that press me down, to make a farther progress, and discharge my promise to your Eminency in relation to that.”

From a superficial viewpoint it might seem that these assertions of a tolerant attitude are

t variance with many actions and ordinances for which Cromwell was responsible. If, however, it is kept in mind that the chief concern of the ruler of England after the death of Charles Stuart was to ensure the peace of the Three Kingdoms when countless circumstances were pregnant with disturbance and conflict, it is easy to reconcile the apparent discrepancies between Cromwell's words and acts. All kinds of extremists, afire with a religious zeal and certainty, uncontrolled by a right mental balance, were springing up in the country, effects of the sudden—or comparatively sudden—release from the reins of episcopal and kindred authority, and of the drastic change in the apparencies of government caused by the killing of the king. These people, as sincere as, but less sane than Cromwell, were not all content to remain merely vocal in propagating the truth which they felt stirring within them : they began to take action to prove the merits of the views they held.

So Cromwell found himself beset with difficulties of religious origins not only from Roman sources flowing through the Royalist adherents, but from supporters of his own side who believed that he was lukewarm in preparing the ground for the establishment of an immediate

tyranny which had owed its power to the existence of the Pope's authority over its monarchs. In Cromwell they had a champion possessed of the capacity requisite to frustrate all attempts to impose the old spiritual serfdom upon them. The massacre of the Irish Protestants in 1641-2, which was led by the priesthood, was an event which inflamed the whole of Protestant England, and it seemed to do more than any other thing to harden Cromwell's heart against Rome.

As a religious man who chanced to be the head of a great State, his ambition was to be the champion of the Protestant cause throughout Europe and the world. The practice of spilling men's blood because they worshipped God in a way that was contrary to that of others was repellent to him, and in using the epithet antichristian to designate the Roman Church in this regard he was using the right word. This was a very personal matter to him, and must be dealt with at some length in this place where the character of the private man is being considered, though its political bearings must be deferred to a later chapter. It was Cromwell's personal feelings which enabled England to take such an effective part in dictating the policy of France over the massacre of the Protestants.

montese in 1655 ; and his contribution of £2,000 from his private purse is a slight indication of the compassion he felt for the survivors, and of his anger at the perpetrators of the crime.

The acceptance by Spain of the office of the fighting vassal of Rome infuriated him, and lent the vehemence of a personal resentment to his vigour as a warlike opponent to that country. To him, any blow at the power of Spain at the hands of Blake was a blow struck for God and the reign of Christ on earth. It is not easy to grasp the precise state of consciousness prevailing in England at that time, when the Protector opened his Parliaments with speeches which were sermons, and sent to his Admiral at sea letters like the following :—

“ You have, as I verily believe and am persuaded, a plentiful stock of prayers going on for you daily, sent up by the soberest and most approved Ministers and Christians in this nation ; and, notwithstanding some discouragements very much wrestling of faith for you : which is to us, and I trust will be to you, matter of great encouragement.”

Never in the history of England did a ruler live and speak publicly with the same certainty that public and private affairs should be con-

As a Puritan in the modern meaning of the word Cromwell was anything but an extremist. His prejudice against Rome and the prevailing sentiment that the use of the senses in the process of worship was an evil thing, made him assent to the practice of destroying things of beauty because they carried a savour of idolatry. If lead were needed for bullets and could not be obtained otherwise, he had little compunction about stripping the roofs of churches ; nor did he hesitate to use churches for warlike purposes when occasion necessitated. In Ireland he ordered the burning of a church which was being used as a shelter for the enemy, but this was a course of action dictated by the laws of war.

Externals meant less than nothing to him. Beauty which he believed to have been used for ignoble or deceiving purposes was foul to him, as to all orthodox Puritans, but there is no evidence that he battered beauty in any spirit of inconsequent religious zeal. Neither is there any evidence that he possessed any positive artistic sense, which reveals a lack which he shares with most men who choose the path of sainthood. The beauty which he worshipped was resident in action and thought. His spiritual understanding was limited, and he

failed to comprehend that spiritual meanings can be revealed to many types of people only through the symbolism of art.

It is strange that the Puritans, men of singularly penetrating, if somewhat narrow, spiritual vision, should have failed to realise that the weakness of the Church of Rome to which they were opposed did not reside in " idolatry " of the figures of Christ and the Virgin Mary but in the temporal ambitions of the Vatican. They attacked the externals which had little, if any, bearing upon the real cause of the Reformation. No activity of the Puritans did their cause more harm or caused more violent execration of their memory than the destruction of objects of beauty which had been sincerely consecrated to the worship of God. His participation in this crime alienated Oliver Cromwell from the goodwill of millions of his countrymen.

Cromwell had no religious objection to sport and pleasure : he was too sane. He proscribed race-meetings, cock-fighting, and such events—as has already been said—for purely political reasons, in order to prevent the assembly of political plotters under the guise of patrons of sport. Nor had he any weak fear of wine as a drink for men : a man of his stern

never used it vindictively, and whose record is not wanting in instances of positive humanity and generosity.

The keynote to this aspect of his temperament is struck in one of the unprejudiced surviving accounts of him. Maidston, a contemporary, writes of him that he had "a temper exceeding fiery, as I have known ; yet the flame of it kept down for the most part, or soon allayed—and naturally compassionate towards objects in distress, even to an effeminate measure . . . he did exceed in tenderness towards sufferers."

Many instances of the exercise of this tenderness could be given, but it will suffice to refer to his humanity to the Scots peasants and troops during the Dunbar campaign. About three weeks before the battle of that name, when his own troops were in sorry plight, he was so moved by the sufferings of the local inhabitants from famine mainly consequent upon the circumstances of war, that he distributed among them pease and wheat "to the value of £240." After the battle his bowels were stirred by the condition of the enemy. He was faced by an embarrassment of success, with over ten thousand prisoners on his hands, and there was no food to give them. What

may be the precise convention of war in such case is immaterial : Cromwell solved the matter in his own way, revealed in the following extract from his letter on the subject to the Lord President of the Council in London :—

“ We have been constrained, even out of Christianity, humanity, and the aforementioned necessity, to dismiss between four and five thousand prisoners, almost starved, sick and wounded ; the remainder, which are the like, or a greater number, I am fain to send by a convoy of four troops of Colonel Hacker’s, to Berwick, and so on to Newcastle, southwards.”

Of the prisoners who were sent by the said convoy, he wrote to the Governor of Newcastle : “ I pray let humanity be exercised towards them ; I am persuaded it will be comely.” His humanity to these poor Scots after their overwhelming defeat, found further expression in the following proclamation, which he ordered to be proclaimed by beat of drums :

“ Forasmuch as I understand that there are several soldiers of the enemy’s army yet abiding in the field who by reason of their wounds could not march from thence :

“ These are therefore to give notice to the inhabitants of this nation that they may and

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hereby have free liberty to repair to the field aforesaid, and, with carts or in any other peaceable way, to carry away the said soldiers to such places as they shall think fit :—provided they meddle not with, or take away, any of the arms there. And all officers and soldiers are to take notice that the same is permitted.”

Cromwell always objected, as has already been said, to the harsh punishments that were meted out to religious fanatics, who, by obtaining a following, were considered inimical to the safety and peace of the State. There were ugly forms of punishment in vogue among the Parliamentary party's zealots, such as branding and burning—and worse; the practice of which was utterly repugnant to this man who was tender to a feminine degree towards sufferers. For the purposes of the peace of the nation he was willing that they should be locked up as a safeguard against disturbance. Even against the Roman Catholics, whose religion was the one hate of his life, Cromwell never sank to such practices.

In the case of poor James Nayler, an unbalanced fanatic of Quakerish tendency who had caused some disturbance by heading a procession that was not the less ludicrous for being the effect of a sincere delusion, Cromwell

spoke out with sharp reprimand. Parliament, with the prevailing capacity of the time for losing all sense of proportion, debated long and wearisomely as to what should be done with the crazed creature, and finally sentenced him to ride with his face to the tail, through various streets and cities, to be whipped, to be branded, to be bored through the tongue, and then to pick oakum upon bread and water. On hearing that this intolerable sentence had been carried out, with the result that the poor broken fellow repented and confessed himself to be mad, the Lord Protector addressed the following enquiry to the Speaker of the Parliament, to be communicated to Parliament :

“ Right Trusty and Well-beloved, We greet you well. Having taken notice of a Judgment lately given by Yourselves against one James Nayler ; Although We detest and abhor the giving or occasioning the least countenance to persons of such opinions and practices, or who are under the guilt of the crimes commonly imputed to the said Person : Yet We, being entrusted in the present Government, on behalf of the People of these Nations, and not knowing how far such proceeding, entered into wholly without Us, may extend to the consequence of it,—Do desire that the House will let Us know the grounds and reasons whereupon they have proceeded.”

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In the records of the oppression of Delinquents, the defeated Royalists, in 1652, there is ample evidence to support Cromwell's statement that he had been compassionate towards Roman Catholics. He is therein shewn as visibly affected by their distresses in suffering deprivation and the sequestration of their estates for the purposes of meeting the costs of the war with the Dutch. Whenever he could, without conflicting with the just needs of the State, he intervened to mitigate as much as possible the harsh sentences passed upon the defeated by the over-zealous and somewhat revengeful Parliamentarians.

It is so rare to find instances of Cromwell's charm and human sweetness—there was so little opportunity for its exercise in his hard life, except towards his relatives—that, even in so brief a study as this, the following incident, quoted from Carlyle's extracts from the Coltness Collections, must be given in full in this place. Cromwell, after taking Edinburgh Castle, was making a progress through the West of Scotland. At a place near Lanark :

"He found the road not practicable for carriages ; and upon his return he called in at Sir Walter's house. (Sir Walter Stewart, Laird of Allertoun, an active Royalist.) There

was none to entertain him but the Lady and Sir Walter's sickly son. The good woman was as much for the King and Royal family as her husband ; but she offered the General the civilities of her house ; and a glass of Canary was presented. The General observed the forms of these times (I have it from good authority) and he asked a blessing in a long pathetic grace before the cup went round ;— he drank his good wishes for the family, and asked for Sir Walter ; and was pleased to say his mother was a Stewart's daughter, and he had a relation to the name. All passed easy ; and our James, being a lad of ten years, came so near as to handle the hilt of one of the swords : upon which Cromwell stroked his head, saying : ' You are my little Captain ; ' and this was all the commission our Captain of Allertoun ever had. The General called for some of his own wines for himself and other officers, and would have the Lady try the wine ; and was so humane, When he saw the young Gentleman so maigre and indisposed, he said, Changing the climate might do good, and the South of France, Montpellier, was the place. Amidst all this humanity and politeness he omitted not, in person, to return thanks to God in a pointed grace after his repast ; and after this he hasted

on his return to join his Army. The Lady had been a strenuous Royalist, and her son a Captain in command at Dunbar ; yet upon this interview with the General she abated much of her zeal. She said she was sure Cromwell was one who feared God, and had that fear in him, and the true interest of Religion at heart."

There are now to be dealt with incidents in Cromwell's career which shew him acting in a spirit utterly at variance with the humanity which demonstrably glowed in his heart. He was not wholly humane, nor was he wholly harsh : he was both. It was a serious defect of temperament that led to his performing and condoning acts of execrable cruelty and savage harshness, and it is no service to his memory to overlook or minimise his blameworthiness in this respect. His humanity was sincere but limited, but its reality is perhaps the more remarkable by contrast with the operation of its opposite quality.

Cromwell was a slave of necessity and his temperamental thoroughness led him in most things to extremes. His preference for hot or cold, as against lukewarm, explains many problems in his career, from his assent to the killing of Charles to the massacres in Ireland.

He carried virtues to that excess which passes to the domain of vice, and he did this always under the belief of the guidance of God. This does not excuse, it helps to explain, his actions which are rightly condemned to this day.

Nothing that has been written or can be written, can blot out Cromwell's shame in Ireland. His attitude towards the Irish, and all fighting in their country against England, was that of a man possessed by fear or hate, or both. His letter to the President of the Council of State reporting the storm of Drogheda is a terrible document, with its reference to the putting to the sword of thousands of men, and every priest met with knocked on the head, as "a marvellous great mercy." The event was one happily rare in the annals of English arms, and whatever may have been the truth concerning the massacre of Protestants in 1641, it does not alter the historic fact that Cromwell carried through his work at Drogheda with an utter lack of humanity, and the maximum of military harshness. The wholesale slaughter of the garrison, many of them disarmed, and slain in cold blood on surrender after holding out in strong places for twenty-four hours, was carried out at the express, and admitted, order of Cromwell. "And indeed,"

he writes, "being in the heat of action, I forbade them to spare any that were in arms in the town." In no other letter written by Cromwell is there so much cause to doubt his sincerity as in that in which he reports this battle. In one place he mentions: "the courage God was pleased to give the defenders," goes on to admit that he ordered the slaughter "in the heat of action," and then endeavours to excuse the extremity of the occurrence on grounds of policy by adding: "I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgment of God upon these barbarous wretches (to whom, he has just admitted, God had given courage to oppose his forces), who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood; *and that it will tend to prevent effusion of blood for the future.* Which are satisfactory grounds to such actions, which otherwise cannot but work remorse and regret." The Old Testament warrior-prophet was solely functioning in Cromwell, and his story, plagued as he was on reflection by uncertainty, does not, for once, hang together.

The same ruthlessness characterised the entire Irish campaign while Cromwell was commanding in person, with the running massacre at Wexford presenting a spectacle scarcely less callous and brutal than Drogheda.

and with other butcheries and burnings and priest-killings that give us no cause to wonder at the bitterness of the Irish towards England.

The campaign had not even the excuse of having been a punitive expedition against the perpetrators of the religious massacre of the Protestants, though it is unquestionable that it was the memory of this that caused Cromwell to conduct his war against the Irish as a wave of terrorism. For he only terrified Ireland, he did not conquer it.

The purpose here being to establish the truth that Oliver Cromwell was ridden at times by a demon of harshness, it is unnecessary to give in detail instances of lesser occasions on which this unattractive characteristic awakened into activity. When necessity seemed to him to demand it, he was inexorable towards turn-coats, renegades, moss-troopers and others. In these cases, however, he did not go to violent extremes ; and also he had the justification of policy. It is Ireland that establishes the harshness, to use a mild word, of one of the greatest Englishmen who ever served his country faithfully.

Loughborough, a proceeding which involved the vocational occupants in considerable danger of loss of life, and—judging by what happened later to certain of the women at the sack of Basing House—more shameful risks than this. An officer, Mr. Squire, lying at his quarters at Fotheringay, received from his friend Cromwell the following letter :—

“ I think I have heard you say that you had a relation in the Nunnery at Loughborough. Pray, if you love her, remove her speedily ; and I send you a pass,—as we have orders to demolish it, and I must not dispute orders :—There is one of the Andrews in it, take her away. Nay, give them heed to go, if they value themselves. I had rather they did. I like no war on women. Pray prevail on all to go, if you can.”

That is, in many ways, a characteristic utterance of Cromwell's, revealing him as a disciplinarian of a somewhat more careful conscience than that which actuated him some years later in Ireland, when he received orders from Parliament to repair to London in the midst of the campaign. On that occasion he chose to look at his orders through the telescope of plausible reasoning with an eye determined to be blind. At this period,

however, seven years before he had the misfortune to be sent to command in Ireland, he was an admitted adherent to the dictum that it is not a soldier's job to reason why. This is emphasised in his letter to the same correspondent, Squire, in the matter of a Captain Montague, who had objected to some duty similar in kind to the demolition of the nunnery. Writes Cromwell on the subject raised by this presumptuous young man :

“ It is to no use any man's saying he will not do this or that. What is to be done is no choice of mine. Let it be sufficient, it is the Parliament's orders, and we to obey them. I am surprised at Montague to say so. Show him this : if the men are not of a mind to obey this Order, I will cashier them, the whole Troop. I heed God's House as much as any man : but vanities and trumpery give no honour to God, nor idols serve Him ; neither do painted windows make men more pious. Let them do as Parliament bid them, or else go home,—and then others will be less careful to do what we had done with judgment.”

Therein speaks the trainer of the Ironsides, no prey to undue niceties, not very subtle in thought, but very sure of the only possible method of dealing with insubordination. There is rarely need to point out that Cromwell was

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House. He was, however, in supreme command, and the responsibility is his. It was, nevertheless, one of the few exceptions that are to be found marring the record of a great disciplinarian.

CHAPTER SIX

THERE was in the character of Cromwell a radiant humility, a capacity for self-abasement, which accounts very largely for the exquisite poise he maintained when walking the tight-rope of absolute power. Never did he see himself as a mighty man of valour, but always as a poor creature doing fumblingly his best to carry on the Lord's work. In his Puritan way he knew himself, and, because he was fundamentally an idealist, he knew how lamentable was his achievement when set beside the shining vision which he had hoped to materialise. His dissatisfaction with himself was derived from the same sources as those which fill a great artist's mind with a sense of futility when he looks at his masterpiece and *knows*, whatever men may say in praise of it, that it fails to represent the perfection of the inspiration out of which it was conceived. His humility was of that character. To have done more, or better, work than other men was no source of real satisfaction to him : what did trouble him was that his performances

fell so far short of the stature which they might have attained.

He wrote to his "esteemed friend Mr. Cotton, Pastor of the Church at Boston in New England :"

"I am a poor weak creature, and not worthy the name of worm ; yet accepted to serve the Lord and his people. Indeed my dear friend, you know not me—my weaknesses, my inordinate passions, my unskilfulness, and everyway unfitness for my work. Yet, yet the Lord, who will have mercy on whom He will, does as you see ! Pray for me."

This is a characteristic utterance, examples of which could be multiplied. It is, properly read, not only a confession of a humble spirit, but a revelation of Cromwell's honest consciousness of his unfitness for the herculean tasks which were being put into his hands to do. It must have been terrifying to face the magnitude of his responsibilities at that time (October 1651), aware, through the honesty of his understanding, how largely they were personal to himself. A smaller spirit might have derived immense self-satisfaction from

the realisation that so much lay in his power and have felt how great a man he must be to encounter such a distinguished destiny.

It were simple to argue that in his numerous references to his unworthiness, Cromwell was prating the pious platitudes of his time, by a kind of rote, as men may mumble prayers unmeaningly. Such an interpretation has been advanced and fervently upheld by adherents to the many myths concerning Oliver ; but only a person whose intellect was limited by nature or disordered by passion could candidly hold such a conviction.

It was no pious lip-servant who lay on a deathbed beseeching the God he feared to hearken to the prayer of "a miserable and wretched creature" that all might be well with England after he had passed, and asserting that he knew that many people had put too high a value upon him, the mere instrument. A man might use humbug to a correspondent, but not to God ; and this man was too direct and sane to waste himself on such a practice.

When Parliament were desirous of striking a medal in commemoration of the almost miraculously successful victory at Dunbar, and sent the engraver all the way to Edinburgh

to submit the designs to him, Cromwell wrote :

“ It was not a little wonder to me to see that you should send Mr. Symonds so great a journey, about a business importing so little, as far as it relates to me . . . It will be very thankfully acknowledged by me, if you will spare the having my Effigies in it.”

He desired, instead of the effigies, the battle cry of the day : THE LORD OF HOSTS. That Cromwell was right, without undue humility, to attribute to a power other than himself the credit for a victory in which his side lost only about a score of men, while the enemy lost some three thousand slain, and left behind over ten thousand prisoners—this, surely, cannot be gainsaid. And his disinclination to have it commemorated by the direct association of an effigy is understandable to all men who have seen great things happen with themselves as the apparent, but not real, cause.

By this time Cromwell had had much experience of affairs in many phases, and when, the same day as he wrote to the Committee of the Army about the Dunbar medal, he was

embarrassed by the request he had received to accept the Chancellorship of Oxford University, he replied : “ Let me advise you of my unfitness to answer the ends of so great a Service and Obligation, with some things very obvious.” He pleads very shrewdly that his public service leaves him no proper leisure to attend rightly to the duties of the proffered position, and implies that it were better to pass himself by in favour of someone who could make such duties his cardinal concern. He was so sensible of the honour, however, and so appreciative of the good-hearted intentions that prompted its offer, that he agreed to accept if his practical objections did not prevail.

In his conviction of his unfitness for this post, and also for that greater one as governor of England, Cromwell was utterly right : he was entirely fit for neither. Other men have been fitter for Chancellor, but there was none less unfit than he for the supreme task of government. The humility of Oliver Cromwell was a sincere and noble weakness.

A man with the great characteristics possessed by Cromwell cannot escape being a positively human being, and an appreciator of

the good things that lie in the lap of life. The rich love that interpenetrates family relationships was his in abundant degree, and he proved himself consistently a dutiful and affectionate son, a faithful, devoted husband, and a kindly father, actively anxious for his children's spiritual and material welfare. At eighteen he was called upon, by his father's death, to manage the family estates and fulfil the functions of the head of the house; and in this state of premature responsibility he carried himself soberly and with credit. It is significant of the general harmony of the Cromwell home that his mother lived with him until her death at the age of ninety-three, and that his wife was able, after the restoration, to satisfy those concerned that she had had no personal part in Oliver's activities, that her private capacity of wife had never extended into the domain of public affairs or notions. Surely a high tribute to Cromwell's reverence for the sanctity of the home !

There are records in plenty to show that this great man of action and stern disciplinarian was sensitive to the lighter and cultural aspects of existence. He loved music and horses ; which are sufficient proofs of high grace in an Englishman. He favoured hunting, hawking

and bowls, and never lost that essential youthfulness which delights in practical jokes and buffoonery. Subtle as his mind was, he was never guilty of a witty saying, but escaped from the sterner aspects through the gateway of broad humour.

He was a genial host both privately and publicly, and did his Puritan best to provide adequate entertainment and recreation for the distinguished foreign visitors whom public affairs brought to him for hospitality.

Lacking any deep personal attraction towards learning, he nevertheless did what lay in his power to further the interests of those whose business it was ; but intellectual culture and material education were to him matters of secondary import compared with religious and moral training.

His capacity for friendship was great, inspired by a tender loving-kindness. The wound inflicted by Hampden's death never healed. Yet he was big enough to lose friends in the cause of public interest, though his regard for them never wavered. His love of England transcended all other loves. Yet once he allowed public affairs to take their course without him, while he attended to purely personal matters. Three weeks before his own

end, his favourite daughter, Elizabeth, lay sick unto death, victim of her grief for the loss of her youngest son. Her father, a sick man himself, sat out days and nights of vigil at her bedside, neglectful of self and State in his loyalty to the suffering child of his loins. Verily, there are moments when men can love Cromwell as well as admire him.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IT may be because of the habit of high-minded men to use a sacred reticence concerning the great loves of their lives, that the greatness of Cromwell's affection for his motherland has not emerged with the right emphasis in the stories and commentaries of his life and character.

His radiant and glorifying patriotism outshone all his other virtues, and inspired him to the exercise of most of his qualities. England was for him a mighty and significant instance of God's mercy to humanity, and to be an Englishman was an honour and a trust, a cause for service and selfless action.

It was in action rather than in speech that this puissant love of his found expression, yet there were times when he slipped into talk about it. When he spoke of Englishmen as God's people, he was using the phrase in the strict Old Testament meaning as it had applied to the Jews : there are even hints that he was not entirely incredulous of those who maintained that England was the exile home of the Lost Tribes. That, however, might be as it

There is that other brief but confident allusion to the glory of being an Englishman :

“ For I did look at, as wrapt up in you together with myself, the hopes and the happiness of,—though not of the greatest,—yet a very great People ; and the best People in the world. And truly and unfeignedly I thought it so ; as a people that have the highest and clearest profession amongst them of the greatest glory, namely Religion : as a People that have been, sometimes up and sometimes down in the honour of the world, but never yet so low but we might measure with other Nations :—and a People that have had a stamp upon them from God.”

Throughout his career a throbbing love of England dominated and directed this man whom many of his race have felt it right to scorn on grounds of little animosities. In this place it is intended only to allude to his personal patriotism, proving its existence by his own words : the deeds to which it inspired him are matter for later pages. Here, where the discussion of his personal attributes is closing, reference need only be made again to his death-bed concern for the welfare of his country and of his countrymen, to which he gave voice in the prayer already quoted in full, “ Lord,

however Thou do dispose of me, continue and go on to do good for them."

So we leave the study of the personal attributes of Cromwell, the man : a consecrated, selfless, pious, stern, and humble patriot, loving England only less than God.

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men to tread. The officers, with Cromwell dominantly amongst them, met in a conclave of prayer which lasted three days, seeking light from God upon their puzzling darkness of spirit. Cromwell bade them examine themselves and the past, to ask the Lord to show them wherein they had erred. Thus they spent three days at Windsor Castle, working themselves up into what may have been just a state of religious hysteria. They ended by persuading themselves that they had been guided to see, not only the cause of their weakness, but also their duty for the immediate future. It is all told by Adjutant-General Allen in a pamphlet, in which he describes the upshot of the three days' meeting in the following words :

“ By which means (prayerful examination) we were, by the gracious hand of the Lord, led to find out the very steps (as we were all then jointly convinced) by which we had departed from the Lord, and provoked him to depart from us. Which we found to be those cursed carnal Conferences our own conceited wisdom, our fears and want of faith had prompted us the year before, to entertain with the king and his party. . . .

“ And in this path the Lord led us, not only to see our sin, but also our duty ; and this so unanimously set with weight upon each heart

that none was able hardly to speak a word to each other for bitter weeping. . . .

“That it was the duty of our day, with the forces we had, to go out and fight against those potent enemies, which that year in all places appeared against us. With an humble confidence, in the name of the Lord only, that we should destroy them. And we were also enabled then, after seriously seeking his face, to come to a very clear and joint resolution, on many grounds at large there debated amongst us, that it was our duty, if ever the Lord brought us back again in peace, to call Charles Stuart, that man of blood, to an account for that blood he had shed, and mischief he had done to his utmost, against the Lord’s Cause and People in these poor Nations.”

The decision having been come to in such unparalleled circumstances, in which strong fighting men were weeping and bereft of speech, its execution could but be a matter of time. It was at this Windsor meeting that Charles Stuart’s doom was fixed, and by men who were temperamentally incapable of going contrary to such divine guidance as they believed themselves to have been given. They might know themselves for poor politicians, their God having no guidance for them, it would seem, in such complex affairs as politics ; but the results of their prayers left them with a challengeable

certainty that they were fit judges as to what must be the policy of the nation.

Cromwell, however, does not appear to have lost all hope of a monarchical settlement. He was less unsure of his political capacity than his fellow-officers of theirs. Had he been wholeheartedly for the death of the king it is doubtful, his temperament being what it was, whether he would have delayed for nearly a year giving effect to the Army's intention. Charles was a prisoner, and the simple fact that Parliament was treating with the king, would not have deterred Cromwell, had he given up all hope of bringing the king to reason. He was busy with the soldiering work he liked best, in Wales, fighting before Pembroke when the matter reached its crisis.

The situation was that Parliament were for a peace with the king, and had reached an agreement, by a considerable majority, that the Treaty of Newport embodied satisfactory conditions and that it should be signed ; while the Army were utterly opposed to the settlement.

Parliament had the right, but the Army had the might. Each had the will and courage to act.

Colonel Pride acted for the Army, forcibly abducting over one hundred and forty members

of Parliament who had voted for the Treaty, thus transforming the minority into a majority, who then carried the rejection of the Treaty. Thus was played the first move in the Army's game of pretence of legal usage in their dealing with the king.

Cromwell reached London while the purge was in progress and took the simple course of assenting to facts as he found them. Whatever his views on the wisdom of the precise course of action that had been taken, events, he apparently thought, had gone too far for him to do other than stand in with his side. Great as was his influence, he could not have undone Pride's work now. He appears to have taken the view that Fate, or God, had created a situation in which no middle course was possible.

No new effort was made to treat with the king. The decision to kill him was given effect to with panic speed. The purged Parliament passed an ordinance for setting up a High Court of Justice to try the king, overcoming its rejection by the House of Lords by passing another illegal ordinance making Parliament supreme to enact laws without consent of king or lords. Thus was the travesty of justice and legality continued.

This High Court consisted of commissioners

unsupported by judges. Of one hundred and thirty-five men called to sit, only fifty-two appeared, so apparent was its illegality. Bradshaw might shout down the king's denials that this mushroom Court had any right or authority to try him, but he could not wipe out the fact that eighty-three chosen commissioners had supported the king's contention by their declination to sit.

For five days this mock court of justice sat, the last two days in private, trying the king without any real regard for the laws of evidence, and finally brought in a verdict that Charles was a tyrant, traitor, murderer, and public enemy of the good people of the nation, and pronounced the sentence of death by beheading, to take effect in three days.

Throughout the trial neither humanity nor magnanimity marked the treatment of the prisoner, who rightly treated the proceedings with the contempt they deserved from all honest men. Even his request for an interview with the Lords and Commons was refused. Courtesy, even decorum, was lacking, and when the king tried to speak after promulgation of the sentence he was roughly bundled out of the hall by soldiers.

Whatever hesitations Cromwell may have

had earlier as to his course in the crisis, once he had come to his decision he threw his whole force into the lamentable business of having the king killed. He sat in the Court, irritable because not quite at his ease, and when Algernon Sidney questioned the authority of the Court, blurted out : " I tell you, we will cut off his head with the crown upon it." In saying this, at the very outset of the proceedings, he said what every commissioner who had consented to sit was thinking. Out of Cromwell's own mouth comes the evidence that the trial was prejudiced from the start.

Cromwell cannot be acquitted from responsibility for this act. He must have assented to the entire illegal arrangements, by which the King of England was denied the meanest rights which would have been accorded to his meanest subject. He put his name to an illegal death-warrant, which had only been executed by means of a whole string of illegal expedients created by a body of men who were demonstrably not representative of the majority of the nation. He had not the excuse in this instance of being divinely led : on the contrary, there is evidence in a speech he made to the Court during the debate upon the ordinance of creation of the High Court of Justi

indicates that his customary inspiration failed to function in this at all :

“ If any man whatsoever hath carried on the design of deposing the king, or disinheriting his posterity ; or, if any man had yet such a design, he should be the greatest rebel and traitor in the world ; but since the Providence of God and Necessity hath cast this upon us, I shall pray God to bless our counsels, though I be not provided on the sudden to give you counsel.”

The fairest conclusion is that Cromwell was carried along by the surge of events at a speed that gave him no time to come to his decision by the methods that were sure for him. The only extenuation for him is that he was not the ringleader of the regicides : some may feel that he should have been that, or not a regicide at all. After the event he had no regret (but then the appointment of the Puritan Notables was the only thing he ever did regret) ; he referred to the execution as “ the great fruit of the war.” The death of the interloper may have been needful, but the preliminary fusing of injustice and brutality were not needful. Cromwell had the power to mitigate these things ; he did not use it. And there is no evidence that, previous to the trial, he was convinced that the way of execution was inevitable.

BOOK TWO

ACHIEVEMENTS

CHAPTER NINE

ANY consideration of the achievements of Oliver Cromwell, apart from his undisputed performances as a military leader, must be conditioned by an understanding of the circumstances of the nation which he was called upon to govern. He himself hinted at the hopelessness of the task which he was set—so far as any positive roadmaking was concerned—when, a few months before his death, he told the Parliament that he undertook the Protectorship, “Not so much out of hope of doing any good, as out of a desire to prevent mischief and evil—which I did see was imminent on the Nation.” In that statement Cromwell sums up the whole question.

If one were concerned to prove that Cromwell was predestined to be the dominating figure in the most difficult period in the political history of his country, the fact of his military prowess would be in itself a sufficient argument.

He was a military genius born with the soul of a prophet. No other explanation than this claim of genius can serve to account for his

over his opponents : he led the army which was best equipped and financed—although even this best was a matter of degree rather than of perfection. It was, however, a fact in favour of Parliament which has not always had just emphasis from anti-Royalist commentators and historians. But when all allowances have been made for all the minor contributory causes, the inspired energy of Oliver Cromwell remains the only satisfactory explanation of the overwhelming character of many of the Parliament's successes.

A paragraph can supply sufficient evidence to justify his claim to genius. At Marston Moor it was nothing but the masterly use of his cavalry by Cromwell which gave the Parliament the victory and left on the field three Royalist dead for every one of the rebel forces. Naseby, from the same cause, resulted in the King's forces losing all their baggage and guns, and between four and six thousand dead as against one thousand Parliament men slain. At Preston, after a three days' battle of uncommon severity, Cromwell captured some ten thousand prisoners and slew thousands. The most incredible engagement of all was the Battle of Dunbar, in which the Scots lost not less than three thousand killed and

ten thousand prisoners, while the highest estimate of the English losses was thirty men killed.

The results of this battle have a critical bearing upon the apparent massacres which occurred in Ireland, at Drogheda and Wexford. Studying Cromwell's military performances chronologically, when one comes to these terrible Irish slaughters, it seems impossible that a whole garrison in each case could be wiped out to a man, with insignificant losses to the victors, unless the Irish had, as the records of Drogheda state, been first disarmed. Yet, when one comes to the accounts of Dunbar, one begins to doubt whether, after all, the greater part of the Irish losses may not have been occasioned by sheer fighting superiority on the part of their opponents. This does not by any means acquit Cromwell's memory in connection with Drogheda and Wexford, but it is reasonable to suggest that it may modify the extent of his guilt. The figures relating to Drogheda show that of the Irish garrison of three thousand men, practically every man was slain, butchered or burnt, against a loss of sixty-four of the English assailants : at Wexford two thousand Irish were killed and twenty English. The shattering "crowning mercy"

CHAPTER TEN

OLIVER CROMWELL came to the end of the wars with a dream in his weary heart.

The crowning mercy which he conceived the Battle of Worcester to have been for the people's cause, he also hoped would prove to be the end of his public labours. He saw himself as having done an unaccustomed job well, saw himself as a man who had paid in not unworthy coin his debt to God for having borne him an Englishman. Through ten years of heavy martial work and heavier responsibilities, during which he had carried in his gallant soul the clear consciousness of the terrible consequences that might follow every great engagement, he had envisioned peace as a happening which would free him, when he should be able with a sweet conscience to go softly all his days. It was a secret hope nurtured in his heart, which might never have been known to posterity had the men whom he called to help him later been touched with the magnanimity of his great-heartedness.

See him, then, in the solitude of his private

room in the night watches after he has returned from Worcester, amid the acclamations of the crowd, and the felicitations of his friends as the victorious champion of the people's cause, gazing inwardly at the fragments of his shattered dream. His officers and his supporters in Parliament, have made it very clear to him that there is no rest for him.

His unbuckled sword lies in a corner, never again to be needed for combat; his quill lies there on the desk as the weapon of the future.

As he realises that his soldiering years are ended his mind runs backwards over the ten hard years of war. That moment at Dunbar, in a moonlit garden, with Monk beside him, after they had gone over again the cornered, apparent hopelessness of their position encompassed by the outnumbering Scots led by dour Lesley—that moment when his shrewd soldier's eye perceived an incredible change in the enemy's dispositions, it comes back to him and he feels again the grateful swelling of his heart with which he exclaimed, as the significance of that change struck him: "The Lord hath delivered them into our hands." There were those, he knew, who doubted the sincerity of his utterances of such faith, yet who but God

could have given them that overwhelming victory the next day, when for twenty or thirty of their own men, they left three thousand dead Scots upon the field and took ten thousand more captive. . . . Great days, those ! . . .

A thrill runs through him as his memory jumps back to that early day at Marston Moor, when first he realised and proved his God-given capacity as a cavalry-leader. The scene lies clear and portentous before his brooding eyes, the threat of defeat on the flank from envelopment ; the instant decision leaping from his mind, the rallying of his magnificent horse, their swift ride to the rear of the threatening troops, the rout. . . . Certain defeat metamorphosed by a stroke into victory attained, with only one friend dead for each three of the King's men.

Almost the twin of this manœuvre had snatched success at Naseby, followed by the same prayerful struggle against the reaction from the strain when he had learnt that the disparity of losses was as between one and five, and that all the King's guns and baggage were captured.

The three days' battle of Preston with its uncertainties and fatigue intolerable, that too had ended well because God had struck through him rather than through any other leader.

Men already called him genius of war because of these things. Was it not enough work for one poor instrument to have done ? Lands, emoluments, honours had been showered upon him, but could he not now have peace just to live ?

He was so weary. Must he gird up his loins for new and strange work ? Why, if he were the genius of war, must he be regarded as the genius of the peace ?

But whatever was in the minds of these tyrannical admirers of his, had he not done his share of work for the people of England ? Why could they not let him be ; why could they not reward him with rest ?

If only he were not convicted of the certainty of public service as the first duty of man, he would yet refuse to do their bidding, resign his commission, and take up his life again as a simple country gentleman. Slowly, unwillingly, he moves towards an acknowledgment of the facts, and knows that God has called him to this new work also. It is, after all, the same cause which calls him now ; war and pacification are inseparable ; and, inimical to his desire, he knows that under God he has the strength and capacity left which can be of service in consolidating the success of the Cause. God's

people shall be made safe to worship and live.

Without joy, but with unrebelling resignation, his decision is made. He rises from his chair, disrobes, gazes through the window at the high stars, sinks with something like a groan to his knees to commune with his God. After the candles are snuffed, and the Lord-General lies in bed, sleep does not come easily. The new task to which he has just consecrated himself begins to take form in his mind : the difficulties and the dangers peep out at him as darker shadows in the night-filled room.

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He saw the outlines of his task, and the conditions under which he must perform it. It was a vision darkened by difficulties and dissensions which nurtured the seeds of disintegration and destruction ; and looking ahead to the point where action would have to begin, he saw himself driven to the adoption of a policy of expediency if a state of preliminary pacification was to be secured. No direct, well-laid, positive policy such as his heart loved was feasible, but only a positive desire, an urgent intention to give at least vitality to negative action.

He saw the fighting power of the Royalists broken—for the time ; but he knew that their leaders would never cease their efforts to throw Cromwell down and place Charles Stuart the younger on his martyred father's throne. Instinctively he knew that they were not men meanly to accept defeat, that their cause was as dear to them as the people's was to him. However astutely he might manage to harmonise the quarrelling sections of his own side, he knew that only by the impermanent expedients of errorism and repression could he keep the Royalists in a state of subjection. It was unthinkable that they would accept him or any other of unroyal blood as head of the State. They, then, formed one unappeasable obstacle to the success of his hope of complete pacification.

There was war still in Ireland and Scotland ; Holland would fight long to preserve her sea-carrying power against which the newly-drafted Navigation Act struck such shrewd blows.

It was a hard beginning of the supreme power they seemed intent to thrust upon him, that he must first arrange some scheme for Parliament whereby the necessary supplies shall be raised for these costly enterprises. He knew that taxation is never a popular thing, and never less

not do less. The new work to which he was called was work for England, for the godly people of England. What, then, mattered difficulties and dangers !

The God who tempered his sword to victory could as surely ink his quill with the fluid of success. A smile of grim resolution touched the corners of his sad mouth as he slipped out of the grip of his struggle into the arms of sleep.

The safety of England was assured.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CROMWELL set himself, during the ensuing year, 1652, to the consolidation of his work in Scotland, which had resulted in an Act of Union ; and in preparing, perhaps unconsciously, for the full management of affairs in England. It was a period of quiet work, the main concern of which was to prevent what had been merely a rebellion against a single and unwise authority from developing, under the impetus given to it by success, into full revolution against all established authority. Against this tendency Cromwell asserted himself in a spirit of sane conservatism, and set himself to steady an unbalanced nation until it regained some semblance of equilibrium. When a house is threatened with a subsidence of the foundations is not, he knew, the time in which to be occupied with plans for a new building : the immediate business was that of shoring and underpinning the endangered structure, and to counter the designs of frantic people, who, because of a few cracks in the walls, would have demolished the entire building in the hope of being able to replace it.

good purpose badly, but until a method of higher efficiency were provided, he would hear of no inconsequent destruction of the imperfect thing on account of its imperfection. Better inadequate functioning than no function at all !

When he was pressed by zealous reformers to sanction the abolition of the tithe principle for the payment of ministers of the gospel, he said : " For my part, I should think I were very treacherous if I took away Tithes, till I see the legislative power settle maintenance to Ministers another way. But whoever they shall be that shall contend to destroy Tithes—it doth as surely cut their (the Ministers') throats as it is a drift to take Tithes away before another mode of maintenance, or way of preparation towards such, be had. Truly I think all such practices and proceedings should be countenanced. I have heard it from as gracious a Minister as any is in England ; I have had it professed : That it would be a far greater satisfaction to them to have maintenance another way—if the State will provide it."

The practice of expediency has fallen into disrepute because it is more often used for unworthy than for worthy ends ; but there are occasions when—unless one elect to stand motionless—it is the only bridge by which one

can pass from one realm of principled action to another. This was Cromwell's situation throughout his reign. His ceaseless concern was—to change the figure—to shape a dovetail by which England should effect the junction between feudal and constitutional monarchy. Zeal in the adherents of both old and new imparted abnormal vitality to the objects of their particular interest. Reaction flourished through a kind of desperate fear, while progressive tendencies suffered a precocious growth in the soil of inordinate hope. To the head of the State fell the task of modifying the effects of both these awkward enthusiasms, and, if possible, to reconcile them, to turn them into a single channel of productiveness.

The granite hardness of realities and events made of Cromwell a subtle fashioner of expedients for the ensuring of that peacefulness and quietude in the endurance of which alone could be done the real work of bringing about a settlement of the nation.

Much of the censure of his critics rests upon this charge. His expediency in the matter of Parliamentary representation has been condemned, and superficially it is clear that not even Charles himself acted more high-handedly than he. In fact, the king's delinquencies in

CHAPTER TWELVE

CROMWELL'S supreme act of unconstitutional audacity was the dismissal of the Rump Parliament: by many people he has never been, will never be, forgiven the blow he then struck at the dignity and authority of the English system of representation. If the circumstances and necessities of the time are ignored one can feel nothing but condemnation for his arrogant assertion of power. The actual position of affairs was such, however, that some move had to be made by someone in order that the dynamic will of the English people should find an outlet for active exercise.

Theoretically Parliament was invincibly powerful, being, in the absence of a monarch, the highest constitutional authority. It had sat throughout the Civil Wars and had done all the work not done by the Army for the ensuring of the victory of its arms. What remained of it, some sixty veterans who had survived Pride's and other purges, remained sitting by courtesy of the Army officers, though it is not likely that this was their view of the situation. They rather saw themselves as the

indispensable remnant of real authority whose great merit was the only remaining legislative asset in a disordered nation. They therefore met the attempted dictation of the Army chiefs in a spirit of stubborn resistance and—remembering, as they should have done, the vicissitudes of the Long Parliament as a whole—they should have foreseen that there was, in the nature of events, a logical certainty that the purging method would be put into operation again. That, precisely, was what the dismissal amounted to.

The Army chiefs were military men in a rather special category. Many of them had sat in that very Parliament, and had voluntarily withdrawn under the Self-denying Ordinance in order that the nation should have a more effective military instrument with which to achieve its aims. They were not soldiers because they favoured that profession, but, fundamentally, in order that some strides might be taken in representative government—that the representatives of the people might act in conditions free from the threat of arbitrary interference from the nominal head of the state.

At bottom the Rump was dismissed in order that Parliament might sit again. It was no longer representative of anything but pre-Civil

War times, having been elected in 1641. It was, at best, a worried assembly, mightily concerned with points of great interest to lawyers, and happy in debating them at a length which gave no sign that they realised that Royalist plots still existed, and that extremists of their own side were running actively wild with bees buzzing in their bonnets.

The Army men, whose war experiences all over the country had given them a clearer knowledge of what was happening and what was likely to happen, were probably justified in their self-assurance.

A Bill for a New Representative had been before the Rump for years, and seemed likely to remain a thing to be debated only, for yet more years. For long the Lord-General had been counselling his insurgent officers to patience ; had been urging the same virtue upon the many petitioners who waited upon him from different parts of the country. At last, however, even his tolerance of ineptitude became exhausted, and a Petition from his officers to Parliament gave him his opportunity. The Rump had come to rely upon his restraining influence, with the officers, and were startled, but still stubborn, when they found him bravely supporting the

petitioning officers. The petition craved, in the tone of demand, that there should be real law reform, that a Gospel Ministry should be set up, and that measures should be taken to ensure the expulsion of unfit and unworthy persons from offices in Church and State. Also it was insisted that the Bill for a New Representative should be hurried on without any further delay or procrastination.

Parliament stirred itself, and there were many conferences between its members and the officers on the particular question of the method of calling the new Parliament. The Rump, victims of a sense of personal indispensability, were for perpetuating themselves without new election, and nominating new members, as well as insisting that they should have power of veto over new members. Their suggestion was obviously as unconstitutional as the Army's proposal for the summoning of a body of wise and godly men.

The state of the country, subject to the powerful influence of the Presbyterian party with its alien form of church government and a certain leaning to a Stuart restoration, and endangered by the existence of secret and open Royalists—this state of the country, in the judgment of both sides, made a popularly

elected representative impossible. The Army was willing, or said it was, that the nomination of new members should be a matter of joint decision between themselves and the Rump, but insisted that the present members should not have *carte blanche* to re-elect themselves.

While the conferences were in progress, Parliament was feverishly active in proceeding to get its Bill finally formulated, hoping and intending to steal a march by simple treachery upon the Army officers. Their confidence in their own power, contemplated from this distance of time, was remarkable. A stolen march was scarcely the method to practise for the outwitting of men of that Army calibre.

However, the Rump went forward swiftly to its doom, began rushing the Bill through its final stages, after promise given not to do so, and was a little disturbed, a quarter of an hour before the question was due to be put, to see the Lord-General himself stride purposefully into the Chamber, and there sit quietly in his place. He may have been incredulous that it was Parliament's serious intention to practise the deception of which he had been warned an hour earlier. At any rate, he sat gloomily silent, while the debate ran its course, until he heard the question being put. Then he

spoke—with effect. He began by commending the House of its good work in the past, as if he was still reluctant to go to extremes ; then he proceeded to enumerate their faults and omissions as a legislative body. Even to this point it seems uncertain whether he meant to use that dour bodyguard of musketeers who had accompanied him to the House and were now waiting without the Chamber. His glance seems to have wandered over the countenances of the individual members, and the vehemence of the clean-living Puritan blazed up. He accused some of his hearers of being drunkards, of living in open contempt of God's commandments. " Corrupt unjust persons ; scandalous to the profession of the Gospel : how can you be a Parliament for God's people ? . . . In the name of God—go."

They went, and " that bauble " after them. Also disappeared for a time the only surviving semblance of a legally constituted power in England. The government which took its place was extempore, illegal, unconstitutional, force-created—and effective. To the government of a nation thus disorganised and helmless, Cromwell, eight months later, succeeded as Lord-Protector. Small wonder that he would rather have sat under his woodside.

This first major unconstitutional act of Cromwell's—the dismissal of the Rump Parliament—was one which no one man should have taken upon himself to perform. Still less should it have been done in the heat of moral indignation against individuals, as, from the records, it seems to have been. This being admitted, it is not easy to conjecture what benefit would have accrued to the nation if the Rump had gone on sitting. The history of England during the following five years can be shown to have been not altogether discreditable.

In the afternoon of the day of the great dismissal, Cromwell stamped down to Westminster and finished his work by disbanding the Council of State, to the great indignation of Haselrig, Scott and Bradshaw.

He and his officers then declared their aims and intentions in a pious document addressed to the nation at large. The support from the Navy, the Armies in Scotland and Ireland, municipal and civil bodies, and the adherence of the judges, mayors and other civil officials to their posts, suggests that Cromwell and his party had the sounder parts of the nation with him. Despite the enormity of the technical crime that had been committed, there was no commensurate outbreak of opposition to it.

perpetrator. He just took charge of the business of government for the time being, and prepared the one masterstroke of stupidity—or was it only miscalculation?—which stands against his name as a statesman.

The logic by which the decision to call the Little Parliament was reached, was sound enough in its way. It had been mainly owing to “persons fearing God, and of approved fidelity and honesty” that the war against an unpopular form of government had been brought to a successful conclusion. Therefore, it would seem that Cromwell argued, this was the type of person required properly to govern the nation. Upon such a supposition he acted, the whole matter having been predetermined by the Army officers’ proposal which was put forward during their discussions with the Rump. With the disappearance of that body, the Army party simply set about putting into operation their plan for collecting about one hundred and forty men, nominated largely by the godly clergy, to act instead of a properly elected Parliament.

One suspects that, despite the quietude which ensued upon the great dismissal, Cromwell and his supporters felt the necessity of having some semblance of a deliberative

assembly to give an appearance of legality to their dictatorship. The fervour in which this great experiment in government by the godly was conceived, endured, at least, until the end of Cromwell's speech to them when they assembled for the first time. His hope of them was vaulting, his expectations as to their effectiveness almost unlimited. The result was one of the sorriest jests of political history, The Little Parliament accomplished nothing, and proved its utter worthlessness by handing back to Cromwell, within five months, the power with which he had invested them.

This failure did, at least, teach Cromwell that the way of the nation's salvation did not lie along that road. Referring to it to his next Parliament he said : " It hath much teaching in it, and I hope will make us all wiser for the future." A still later reference refers to it as " a story of my own weakness and folly," and says that " the issue was not answerable to the simplicity and honesty of the design."

Having dismissed one Parliament and finding that its successor had dismissed itself, Cromwell discovered himself once more possessed of absolute power by default of any other authority who could exercise it. He had already told the Little Parliament that he did not wish

“to grasp at the power ourselves, or keep it in military hands.” Reliant as he was upon the support of the Army, he recognised the danger of attempting to rule and settle the nation on such a basis. His immediate urgent desire was to effect a transfer of the real power held by himself and the Army to some more constitutional body. He therefore summoned his Council of Officers with other influential men, and in four days a new government was formed.

Cromwell was made Lord Protector of the Commonwealth. An Instrument of Government was drawn up, and a Council of from thirteen to twenty-one decided upon to share in the Government of the country under the Protector, with the Commons of the Three Kingdoms meeting in triennial Parliament. This was effected in December 1653, and the date for the meeting of the new Parliament was fixed for September 3rd, 1654. The Protector and his Council were to have power during this interval to make ordinances.

This assertion of power had the immediate effect of reawakening slumbering antagonisms and of giving birth to new disturbances. The uncertainty which had prevailed as to what was to be the precise outcome of the Rebellion was

Oliver Cromwell

Of men of such calibre was the Republican party composed, and it is significant of Cromwell's capacity that he was able to counteract their activities with so little severity and violence. Those who had looked forward to an outcome which would have made possible the establishment of a religious and social millenium, some of them one-time sterling friends of the new Lord Protector, fell away from him in disappointment and enmity.

Quakers, Levellers, Fifth Monarchists, Anabaptists were equally chagrined at the dispersal of their impracticable dreams, and infuriated with the man who had made himself, or permitted himself to be made, something very like an old-time king. Plots against his life were planned by different factions and were frustrated, what time the Protector and his Council proceeded to act upon their powers by attending to the hard and practical business of governing the country until Parliament should meet. They passed some eighty Ordinances, and brought various foreign wars to an end in creditable treaties.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CROMWELL and his Council, having made themselves responsible for the entire government of the country, did not hesitate to act along the lines which they considered most likely to lead to pacification at home, and security abroad. He had always made his view of the situation clear, both to the Rump and the Little Parliaments. Being the men they were, he and his councillors grappled at once and with vigour with the principal cause of discontent throughout the nation. Episcopacy having been abolished as one of the main effects of the successful war, and Presbyterianism being undesired by the English, and dangerous on account of its Scottish leanings towards a Stuart Restoration, some new form of church government had to be established.

Cromwell looked into the heart of the question with his single Puritan vision and decided that the chief need of the godly people in their places of worship was to have worthy ministers. His contention was that if sincere, well-living men were authorised to preach the Gospel, the chief problem of church government

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

UNTRAMMELLED by a clumsy deliberative assembly, Cromwell was able to act as a man of action again, and he passed ordinances which should have immediate effects in allaying the winds of disturbance. They covered all manner of subjects, from determining the number of hackney coaches that should ply for hire in London to such weighty matters as reform of the Court of Chancery, an amnesty for Scotland, Union with that nation, the law of treason, and finance.

During this time of practical dictatorship he found time and necessity to consider the spectacular aspect of his position as head of the State. His council doubtless were interested in this question, and may have prompted him to action, but his reverence for all well-founded tradition must have made such prompting needless. He had been making good treaties with four foreign countries, and the need came to receive ambassadors in a state worthy of the chief Englishman. He must sacrifice his love of personal simplicity, and assume at least the minimum pomp and

circumstances of kingship. Black velvet must supplant rough broadcloth, and rightly royal quarters must be inhabited, instead of the comfortable lodging of the Cockpit. He must surround himself with the symbols that ensure due safety for his person, as well as privacy.

Therefore, in April 1654, four months after his Proclamation as Lord Protector, we see him moving into the Royal Apartments in Whitehall, attended by ushers, protected by life-guards, wearing his natural dignity and distinction perhaps a little more consciously for the fine clothing that destiny has measured for him ; but remaining at heart the simple and single-minded servant of England, not entirely at ease in his livery. He adopts the first person plural in his official speech and correspondence as if it were his natural manner, and succeeds by all these important observances of exteriors in actively incensing all the republican, levelling, and royalist factions to a fresh term of impotent activity.

The Republicans, stout men who fought for the Cause as sincerely as he, suffered a paroxysm of dismay and disappointment at this emphasis of the dispersal of their dream. The actual form of government that should follow the death of the King had never been

stated, and they must have thought that logically a republic would be formed. It was, to them, the obvious consequence. Was it because they were republican that there was no statesman among them?

No man aware of the meaning and vitality of the English constitution, which had worked admirably, by and large, until an alien line of kings had ignorantly challenged its spirit, no man knowing these things could have seriously contemplated a republic.

Cromwell had this awareness, and it was this insight that made him accept the distasteful rôle of a king in everything but name and succession. It was this, also, that led him to counter the machinations of his republican friends with impersonal firmness. He hated this sad work of suppressing men like Overton, a friend of the invaluable John Milton; Colonel Okey, a resolute soldier, Ludlow and others who had done good service for the Cause : but the Army must be protected from dangerous disaffection, and the peaceful atmosphere of settlement must not be uselessly disturbed. He acted swiftly and strongly, yet without undue severity, and the leaders of the republican revolt were subdued into ineffectualness.

Every Saturday the Lord Protector drives out to Hampton Court for the week-end, and this habit has been observed by certain daring royalist plotters, who see in it an opportunity to effect the assassination of the their arch-enemy. These murder plots have been anticipated, and their contravention has been for some time now the special province of State Secretary Thurloe, a man with an uncanny capacity for such work, and served by assistants who are ready to lay down their lives to effect the survival of Cromwell. He learns that his chief is to be assassinated on a certain Saturday, while other bold spirits occupy themselves with preliminaries for proclaiming Charles Stuart king in London. Thurloe leaves the leaders in a sense of false security, and then roughly seizes them in their beds the night before their nefarious activity was to commence. Trial by the High Court of Justice follows and two are executed and the rest safely imprisoned.

Cromwell saw that his Protectorate Government was not yet universally popular, had these reasons to know it ; but there were signs of its sufficient approval for the purpose of continuous functioning. The officers of the Army in England, Scotland and Ireland, had

sent him assurances of their support, the City of London had expressed its submission to his authority. Judges, sheriffs, and all the essential public services, or the majority of them, had consented to carry on their duties under the new order. In a word, his writ ran throughout the country without serious demur, and those in management of the detailed machinery of government continued in their work, taking their orders from the Protector.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THUS the nine months of more or less absolute rule passed, and on September 3rd, 1654, anniversary of Dunbar and Worcester, and a date of almost mystic significance to Oliver Cromwell, he goes down to Westminster and performs the formal ceremony of opening the first Protectorate Parliament.

Next day, one of the simplest living men in England, he dons his kingly livery, sits in the ornate and gilded coach with his son Henry, and Lambert his comrade, surrounded by life guards, and drives with all the glittering trappings of great place between cheering throngs of the people whom he has so nobly served. A consciousness of the bright significance of the occasion inspires him: it seems that at last a sure constructive movement forward towards the settlement of the three nations has been inaugurated. Purely monarchical government has passed, and a well approved substitute has been accepted to replace it.

By the Protector's writs three hundred and forty men have been elected by as popular a

the promised land is reached. He now deals with the obstacles to peace. With almost contemptuous brevity he dismisses the folly of the communistic Levellers with their selfish disrespect for other men's property, then passes on to dispose of those fanatics who would insist that liberty of individual conscience should over-ride the power of the law. He points out to those who are persuaded by prophecy that the Fifth Monarchy is a reign of material power under Christ : " That Jesus Christ will have a time to set up His reign in our hearts ; by subduing those corruptions and lusts and evils that are there ; which now reign more in the world than, I hope, in due time they shall do. And when more fulness of the Spirit is poured forth to subdue iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness, then will the approach of that glory be." He admits that " notions will hurt none but those who have them," but when such notions take action in resisting the authority of the law of the land, then the magistrate must take measures to restrain them. Iconoclasm of this nature must be suppressed, despite the sincerity of those who would practice it. These frenzies of religious vertigo within the people's party increase the anxieties of the government.

and are indulged despite the dangers that threaten from the common enemy.

The Royalists are not sleeping, but furiously plotting—his own assassination among other perturbing things—in France and with the fighting vassal of Antichrist. He startles most of his hearers by saying that he has documentary proof of the machinations of the Jesuits to fix an Episcopal power in England, that they have delimited their dioceses and appointed archdeacons.

These are the conditions at home with which he and his council have had to deal, and they have so dealt with them that Parliament will have an easier task : those ordinances have altered, or begun to alter, things for the better.

Abroad there had been wars with Portugal, France, the Dutch and the Danes, altogether a very pyramid of troubles ; and now there is peace with them all, honourable, satisfactory treaties duly signed. These nations had thought that England, internally distracted could not hold out, and there was hope that her most important cloth manufacturing trade could be wrested from her. This he had prevented, and, on the positive side, the sea-carrying power of England had been increased despite all the resistance and anger of their

makes his military arrangements to ensure the doing of his will.

Next morning members who do not repair straightway to the said Chamber, find their entrance to the House barred by soldiers who have their orders to let no man pass. There is much gesticulating and clacking of tongues whose words are mere noise, impotent ; and in due course the Painted Chamber is filled with an excited and very curious assembly of talkers.

His Highness the Lord Protector shows himself hurt as well as angry at the cause of the gathering, but, mainly, he is determined. He tells them with noble sincerity that he never desired the place that has been thrust upon him that he refused it "again and again !" He settles that point first. He is Lord Protector in order that the arbitrary power which he held as Lord-General of the forces might be curbed, not "as uncharitable men, who measure others by themselves" would say, to increase his power and confirm it. Soon, however, he wearies of the pleading and excusing tone which is foreign to his temperament, and comes to close grips with the object of his calling them to hear him.

He asserts and proves that his govern-

ment is, as near as may be, constitutional, and that it enjoys the approval and support of the essential public services and of the good people as a whole. He reminds his hearers that it was this very Government, which they have been questioning, that called them, or enabled them to be called. Furthermore it was specifically stated by the Act determining the conditions of election : " That the Persons so chosen should not have the power to alter the Government as now settled in one single Person and a Parliament."

Each man listening to him had been aware of this proviso, and yet they had done nothing since they met but debate upon this very excluded subject. Therefore every man of them shall sign a declaration, which has been prepared and is ready for their signatures in the Lobby without the Parliament Door. Any man who refuses to subscribe to this declaration shall be thenceforth excluded from Parliament.

Throughout Cromwell has spoken as a man who means to have his way, and in less than twenty days three hundred signatures have been appended. The sullen Republicans will not sign, and their recusancy, at least, is not unpleasing to the Protector. They are, at best, simple obstructionists.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

PARLIAMENT having, to all intents and purposes, lain idle for five months, the plotters of various persuasions were now reaching a climax of their activity, and the state of the country was such as to fill Cromwell with as much alarm as he was able to get into his fearless being. The danger was increased by the conjunction that had been effected between the Anabaptists and Royalists, and many petty expressions of the insurrectionist spirit were occurring, and threatened to effect a general outburst of disaffected parties. Domestic policy for Cromwell was dictated by events to that degree and with that rapidity that made it a succession of expedients invented by the one purpose of maintaining peace without too close a reference to the legality of the power employed to ensure this object. Where Parliament had failed him, the loyal and effective Army responded as in the old days.

Major John Wildman, an Anabaptist member who had refused to sign the submissive declaration, had been busy in Wiltshire, with dour Major-General Harrison, Lord Grey of

Groby, and others. Sir Joseph Wagstaff, with one Penruddock, had made a mixed rendezvous at Salisbury and demonstrated somewhat ineffectively ; after which they set out for Cornwall, but were overtaken and captured at South Molton. In the upshot Penruddock and another leader, Grove, were tried and beheaded at Exeter. Other outbreaks occurred in North Wales, Shrewsbury, Rufford Abbey, Marston Moor and in Northumberland, giving rise to a sense of widespread active disaffection, and inspiring Cromwell to strong counteraction.

The Anabaptist-Royalist movement, which was the most threatening, was concentrated mainly in the south-western counties, and it was the success of the means adopted to cope with it, that resulted in the famous Major-General's expedient of government.

Desborow, commanding the Regular troops in these counties, required extended powers if he was to be successful in his repressive policy. He was therefore, by commission, given power over the Militia and all other civic and military forces, and practically unlimited authority to effect the pacification of the district under his command. He became, in effect, a sub-Protector of his territory, holding both administrative and executive powers, limited only by

little harm. Parliamentary privilege suffered a blow in order that its fundamental privilege, which was to serve the nation honestly, might not be made a mockery. Parliament survived the blow with scarcely the mark of a bruise, but with considerable crying out from those who saw the blow struck and were persuaded that, in the nature of things, they must be hurt, whether they could feel it or not. Cromwell was indifferent alike to whether they were hurt or noisy. He meant to get things running at last, privilege or no privilege.

This Parliament offered Cromwell the title of king, invented an excuse to re-invest him in state as Lord Protector, permitted him to name his successor and to appoint a new House of Peers, refused to sanction the said House when he had appointed it, and got itself dissolved for its pains.

By this time Cromwell was, as it turned out, at the end of his struggle to harmonise hard facts with constitutional practice. He had, with his own mind and hands, secured a reasonably settled state in the country. It was the misfortune of England that there was no one of his calibre to carry on the work.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

IT may be doubted whether any act of Cromwell's was of such historic importance as his valiant fight for the maintenance of the British Constitution in its essentials.

A superficial case could very easily be prepared to prove that of all men who have held governing power in England he was guilty of the most flagrantly unconstitutional acts. If, however, his career is examined in the light of the condition of the country, it will be discovered that Cromwell ever had before him a clear realisation of the importance of preserving the constitution.

There are schools of thought who make Cromwell responsible for the history of England from 1641 until 1658. It was he who started the regicidal war ; he who was mainly responsible for the execution of Charles, prompting Pride's Purge to that end ; he who led the military party, but cunningly pretended to be led by them ; he who dismissed and called Parliaments as his vanity of power suggested ; who performed unconstitutional acts out of a

tempest of personal spleen. If Republicans, Anabaptists, Quakers, Fifth Monarchy men would not follow tamely his lead in all things, it was he who suppressed and punished them, out of regard for nothing but his personal supremacy.

Cromwell's unconstitutional acts were forced upon him by the knowledge that the first duty of the governing bodies of the country was the ensuring of the pacification of the people, instead of wasting time in artificially forcing the growth of the constitution to cover what changes might have been caused by the death of the King. The dismissal of the Rump Parliament was an act performed in deliberate defence of the constitution, which its members were endeavouring to tamper with for personal ends. The Rump proposed to change the fundamental principle of Parliamentary representation in a way that would ensure their own perpetuation, while Cromwell's proposal for an assembly of Puritan notables, was admittedly a temporary expedient to provide a check upon the absolute power of himself and the Council of officers, until such time as the settlement of the nations made the normal system of representation practicable once more.

Cromwell knew that he and his friends had fought, not for a change in the constitution, but for its preservation against the attack made upon it by Stuart arrogance. His reverence for its reality is woven into his actions and words. His quarrel with the technical constitutionalists was akin to that of a man who, when a fire is raging in the house, loses patience with those who insist upon preparing meals to customary schedule and dusting furniture which he is fighting to save.

He never wavered from his adherence to the constitutional form of government by a single person and an elected representative. His support of kingship was so strong that he almost accepted the title of king himself, despite his temperamental distaste for personal power and aggrandisement. He had no quarrel with kingship. He would as soon have thought of abolishing the rank of general in the army because an unworthy general had been court-martialled, as abolish monarchy because one king had, in the opinion of some of his subjects, proved himself unsuitable for the honour.

So with Parliament. The fact that, among the elected members of his second Parliament under Protectorate, one hundred members

seemed to him unfit to legislate for the immediate needs of the nations, did not persuade him that Parliament was an effete institution. They were known enemies of his government, most of them desirous of pulling down the constitution and setting up an entirely new form of government, republican or other. Even at the risk of being charged with unconstitutional practice, he would maintain the constitution.

If the performances of Cromwell as virtual dictator during the periods while Parliament was not sitting, are set beside the achievements of Parliament in session, it would appear that he could have got England into a pacified state, ready to enjoy all its constitutional advantages, more quickly without the assistance of any deliberative assembly. The institution of the Protectorate, preserving the reality and principle of kingship, was non-Parliamentary; the wars and treaties with the Dutch, with France, Portugal and Denmark, were carried through before the first Protectorate Parliament was called, and in the process a great respect engendered in foreign courts for the new Commonwealth. The work of pacification under the Major-Generals was inaugurated by Cromwell because Parliament had failed the

people in their need. It was as head of the State of England that he, without benefit of Parliament, intervened with France and other sovereign states to redress the wrong done to the persecuted Protestants in Piedmont, and it was he who gave Blake his opportunity to break the naval power of Spain and clear the Mediterranean of pirates, and prepared the naval and military armament which resulted in the capture of Jamaica.

The major performances for the domestic and foreign benefit of England, were Cromwell's, acting without the brake of Parliament, and, therefore, it would seem that only his reverence for the Constitution made him endeavour to rule with its co-operation. He would probably have done better to have acted as a pure dictator, so far as immediate results were concerned, but he was undoubtedly conscious of the disastrous blow that would have been struck at the Constitution by such a course of action.

Cromwell, as soon as Scottish affairs had been settled, and the final Royalist conflagration mastered at Worcester, adapted the constitution to the unparalleled conditions of the time, and interfered not at all with its fundamental principles. By this action he imperilled his own life from assassination, and referred to all

have swallowed both the Civil and Religious interest."

It was with this extreme type of mind that Cromwell had to contend in his efforts to bring the country to peace, and to establish some ordered form of church government, as well as a state of religious liberty for the people. He was as opposed to, as he was scornful of, that fanaticism which would claim absolute rightness for its own interpretations and use whatever means lay in its power to subject others of different understanding to its dominance. In his opening speech to his First Protectorate Parliament, he said :

"Is there not yet upon the spirits of men a strange itch? Nothing will satisfy them unless they can press their finger upon their brethren's consciences, to pinch them there. To do this was no part of the contest we had with the common adversary. For indeed Religion was not the thing at first contested for at all: but God brought it to that issue at last; and gave it unto us by way of redundancy; and at last it proved to be that which was most dear to us. And wherein consisted this more than in obtaining that liberty from the tyranny of the Bishops to all species of Protestants to worship God according to their own light and consciences. . . . Those that were sound in faith,

how proper was it for them to labour for liberty, for a just liberty, that men might not be trampled upon for their consciences ! Had they not themselves laboured, but lately, under the weight of persecution ? And was it fit for them to sit heavy upon others ? Is it ingenuous to ask liberty and not to give it ? What greater hypocrisy than for those who were oppressed by the Bishops to become the greatest oppressors themselves, so soon as their yoke was removed ? I could wish that they who call for liberty now also had not too much of that spirit, if the power were in their hands."

It must be reiterated that the only religion which was in any sense persecuted by Cromwell was the Church of Rome, and that, not because he personally differed from it as a religion, but because it was illegal, and because its leaders were discontent to confine their activities to the spiritual, or religious, sphere. His contentions with those sects of the people's party whom he had to suppress had nothing whatever to do with their individual consciences, but only with their interference with, or ignoring of, the law of the land. Here, he found, extremes met.

The fault of the Friends and other sects was precisely of the same nature as the fault of the Roman Catholics. They affected the right to

suppressing the protagonists of these tendencies to anarchy was exemplary. He dealt with them with firmness, and with a greater leniency and kindliness than his Parliaments were ready to grant. His blunt reproof to Parliament for their diabolical punishment of poor James Nayler, whose religious fanaticism and poverty of intellect had permitted him to allow men to call him Messiah ; and his strong intervention to save Biddle, the Socinian, from a similar fate, give a clear indication of his sympathy with all misguided zealots. His policy was to use only such measures as would, with the minimum of suffering to them, render them incapable of disturbing the peace of the nation.

Knowing from his own experience how marvellously the divine light of inspiration could guide, he was tender towards those whose defective vision and undeveloped mind caused them to be misled in its radiance.

His policy of tolerance for all in things spiritual, and obedience by all in things civil, was effective. He carried it through when both aspects of it were being actively challenged to a degree and with a zeal which had never before faced a ruler of England.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Cromwell by his unbending insistence that the

right to act by spiritual ideals was limited by the duty to observe the civil law, saved the country from a state of anarchy which would have placed England at the mercy of any strong antagonist.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

WHEN he came into power, Cromwell faced the realities of the position of England abroad with characteristic energy and vision. He saw neighbouring countries springing forward with eagerness to take fullest advantage of the distracted state of the new Commonwealth, trusting to the crippling effects of internecine troubles to make effective retaliation unlikely. He knew that these antagonists relied upon the exhaustion of national wealth, occasioned by the long civil wars, to enable them to carry through their various designs before the treasury could be replenished.

Cromwell's dynamic love of England flamed before the threat of this blow at her prestige. Peace must be had abroad as well as at home, but the conditions must be honourable. It was no wise policy, conditions being what they were, to prolong any of the wars for any but the most practical purposes. The treasury *was* nearly empty, but he must act as if it were inexhaustible. England must remain a great European power. More, she must become the

queen of the Protestant world, beyond the "great ditch" which environed her.

The war with the Dutch was mainly a war for commercial ends, but upon its outcome great permanent issues depended. The Dutch supremacy as a sea-carrying power had to be broken in order that it should pass to England. This was the meaning of the Navigation Act of 1651, with its provision that all imports should be brought to England in English bottoms, or in the ships of the country of their origin. It fell to Cromwell and his Council, in the early months of the Protectorate to bring the war to an end in a treaty of great benefit to England.

From this victory dates the real beginning of British maritime supremacy, upon which a vast Imperial prosperity was based. To Blake and his mighty seamen must be accorded the chief honour in this high work, for it was his genius as a commander, and their loyal toughness in obeying him that made possible the defeat of men of the consummate talent of van Tromp and de Ruyter. After them, the credit is as much due to Cromwell, the vital force of English statesmanship which enabled them to be equipped and supplied, as to any one man except Vane.

When his first Parliament met, Cromwell was able to tell the members of much sound work done in the domain of foreign affairs during the nine months which had elapsed since he had been proclaimed Lord Protector :

You have an honourable peace (with Swedeland) with a kingdom which, not many years since, was much a friend to France, and lately perhaps inclinable enough to the Spaniard. . . . You have a peace with the Danes—a State that lay contiguous to that part of this Island which hath given us the most trouble. . . . You have a peace with the Dutch . . . so well known in the benefit and consequences thereof. You have a peace likewise with the Crown of Portugal, which, your merchants make us believe, is of good concernment to their trade. . . . One thing has been obtained in this treaty, liberty to worship in Chapels of their (English traders') own.

These achievements were concerned mainly with the conclusion of affairs bequeathed to him by Parliament, but it would seem that their swift settlement was due to the active, forth-right vigour which Cromwell, and his Council, applied to their execution.

Cromwell's foreign outlook was, in the main, that of a crusader ; secondarily it was rightly

concerned with the protection and extension of English trade and maritime power. As successful champion of the Protestant party in his own land, he desired to extend the field of Protestant interest to all countries, to effect a union of the European states which practised the Reformed Faith. France and Spain were Catholic and powerful, and the latter country the theatre of the infamous Inquisition. Against these powers, antagonistic as they were politically, Cromwell conceived the necessity of a Protestant combination of a defensive character, in order that the people might have power as well as right on their side. He may have felt that the measures that had proved necessary to preserve English Protestantism might come to be needed on an international scale in order that Protestantism generally should survive.

He still feared the political or temporal aspirations of Rome, knowing with what assiduity they were working to re-establish themselves surreptitiously in England. The same methods were probably being practised, in other countries. Combination of the interested powers, if it effected nothing else, would at least give opportunity for a common secret service surveillance of Catholic machina-

tions, and prevent any widespread movement from reaching the stage of serious action, Such a combination, overtly effected in the interests of pure Protestantism, would lessen the constant threat of Spanish force from being used in behalf of Rome or of Catholic pretenders.

Cromwell failed to carry through this great scheme, but he did not cease to do what he could, single-handed, for the ideal that inspired it.

In the month of June, 1655, came to England the news that the Duke of Savoy had vilely massacred or driven from their homes and valleys the Protestants of Piedmont, in the cause of Roman Catholicism. He who would make England queen of the Protestant world melted in pity and rose in wrath in a single movement. It was no direct concern of England, but it was a very intimate concern of her ruler, personally, and of all the best spirits among his subjects. He sent the victims a sum of £2,000 from his private purse, and had a collection made throughout the country. So much for the private man.

The Lord Protector of the Commonwealth was due to sign a treaty with the French on this very day ; but he came forward with a new

condition at this last moment. Unless Cardinal Mazarin—who was to ask him later for leniency for Catholics—would undertake on behalf of France to intervene with the Duke for the redress of the cruel grievances of the poor persecuted Vaudois, he would sign no treaty. Cromwell had his way.

What attitude the other Protestant states might have taken in the matter cannot now be known. Cromwell did not wait to hear. He had his invaluable foreign secretary, John Milton, indite to them all calls for united action in order that pressure, of a weight that could not be resisted, should be brought to bear upon the persecuting princeling. Whatever may be said in criticism of Cromwell's scheme for a Protestant league, it is undeniable that it was due to the principle underlying it, getting into action, that won back their homes for the Vaudois.

It was a mighty act of humanity performed with grace and energy, as disinterested as the good Samaritan's rescue of the beaten Jew—and pointing, internationally, the same moral. Small wonder that, with such a ruler, the prestige of England became during his reign the apex of the pinnacle of European greatness! If England could demand thus effectively in a

cause from which she secured no material gain, what might she not do if her own interests were tampered with.

Before Cromwell launched his great attack upon Spain in the West Indies, Blake was sent to make the Mediterranean safe for English traders and shipping. Trade was what Oliver would have called a concernment of the nation, and the Barbary pirates had too long had immunity in their nefarious warfare upon peaceable mariners. This Cromwell's greatest admiral brought to an end, clearing the predatory band from the middle sea, and calling upon the Duke of Tuscany, the Pope himself, as well as the Deys of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli to account for the wrongs done to British commerce. Thus grew the power of England at sea.

The epic of Jamaica tells the story of not the least of Oliver Cromwell's achievements, and through its narrative of blood and tears and pestilence, reveals him as a statesman of unerring foresight and indomitable purpose.

The actual capture of the island was the result of a secondary action by Sea-General Penn and Land-General Venables, which followed upon

their defeat at Hispaniola (San Domingo). Its retention by England was the result of Cromwell's personal determination in the face of terrifying odds. Penn and Venables were the officers appointed to command an armament of some sixty ships, carrying four thousand soldiers, of whom only two regiments were trained veterans, and the remainder recruited from Royalist and other insurrectionary volunteers. They sailed under sealed orders, which when unsealed unfolded plans for a strong and purposeful assault on the dominance of Spain in the Western Atlantic, on the shores of which that Rome-ridden power had fallen into a practice of inhuman slaughter and tyranny against Protestants and pioneer Englishmen settled there.

Cromwell had good reason to expect permanent results from this armament, for he and his council had worked indefatigably to supply it with the means of success. They had spent months in this work of preparation, and waited with leaping hopes for the news of the results of the main action against Hispaniola. Upon this rested the possibility of striking a mortal blow at the fighting force of Antichrist, and, secondarily, of rendering safe the western trade routes, and opening up new fields for the

learnt the awfulness of the conditions that had turned brave men into poltroons, fearful of the responsibility of commanding a force which was being swiftly annihilated by rigours of climate and unknown diseases—and set his strong jaw.

To him Jamaica was something instead of the threatened nothing ; a foothold in the domain of arrogant Spanish power doing the nefarious work of Antichrist ; a base for the protection of peaceable English traders. Men of high and low estate might die by thousands, but he *knew* that they were dying in as great a cause as could make death more desirable than life. That the dying themselves might not be aware of this worthiness of sacrifice was of little account.

Come what might, Jamaica must be held for England and God.

Cromwell is again on the bridge that spans the gulf between Old and New Testaments. Englishmen must die that Englishmen unborn may live. Pain and pity leave no room for callousness in this great heart, but England must come to mean something more than a sweet island environed by a great ditch. She must have outposts for the protection of God's cause throughout the world.

Jamaica must be held !.

Never in the history of a nation not wanting in heroic qualities were men called upon to exercise a higher degree of fortitude and soul-courage as were Fortescue, Sedgwick and Brayne, successive governors of Jamaica in its earliest English days. What Penn and Venables had run from, they faced and endured until death put an end to their sufferings. When Cromwell called, strong men became great.

While governors were swiftly following each other to the grave, lesser men were still dying in tribes, earning a nobler death than ever could have come to them in Barbadoes. Reinforcements from New England plantations supplemented those from Barbadoes, and fed the death-dragon of Jamaica until its hunger should be satisfied, or some way be found of chaining it. They fell at their tasks of fortifying the island, of tilling its pestilent soil, of making it somehow ultimately habitable. And Cromwell's was the will that held them there. Ruthless he was in his Imperial activity, but wittingly so, under the guidance of his stern God.

The island having been more or less guaranteed an adequate supply of men for colonising

Oliver Cromwell

his astute bargaining with Mazarin o Dunkirk and Mardike, was earlier rev in one of his fine letters to Blake, in whi h discussed the various possibilities of sec a Mediterranean base. Having dealt the prospects of capturing Cadiz, he as

Whether any other place be attempt^{ed} especially that of the Town and Castl^e Gibraltar,—which if possessed and made able by us, would it not be both an advan to our trade and an annoyance to the Spani and enable us, without keeping so great a upon that coast, with six nimble frigates lo there to do the Spaniard more harm than fleet, and ease our own charge?

It proved that Gibraltar was not attempt in the circumstances and with the fig resources at the disposal of Blake and Mon. It fell to others to act upon the saga suggestion—with what effect upon B dominion of the sea, all men know.

The best commentary upon Crom foreign policy is that of the facts at his d In 1658 England was the strongest and respected power in Europe. This is con by no one. A policy which could lif country to such an eminence, out of the s

of unimportance into which its prestige had fallen eight short years before, must have answered effectively the needs of the time. It was for his successors to continue and consolidate the work he had begun.

CONCLUSION

THE record of a man of Cromwell's calibre is one that can never be complete. His influence persists beyond the years of his life, fertilising events through the inspiration his example awakens in unborn men. The factual records of his domestic and foreign policies are almost barren of indication of what his complete work was. The things he prevented from happening were even more important than those which he caused to happen. There is hardly anything to show of a positive character for the greater quantity of the energy which Cromwell expended with such prodigal unconcern, just as the rough stones and faggots of its foundation are invisible when a strong road has been made.

There is a striking modern parallel of the methods and achievements of Cromwell in the appearance of Signor Mussolini in Italy, saving his country from the onset of forces of destruction and disintegration, kindred to those which sought to undermine the greatness of England in the latter half of the seventeenth

century. Mussolini battling with the insidious assaults of Communism and other systems of thought which ignore the realities of organised national life, presents a spectacle astonishingly like that of Cromwell grappling with the intellectual destroyers of his day. The Italian's methods have been to create a strong force of patriots to protect the nation from its evil elements, and to use that force fearlessly and with vigour. Preventive measures are his main concern : Mussolini is forced to occupy himself with activities which shall ensure the survival and rehabilitation of his country, to counteract the destructive consequences of the depletion of national vitality and will which resulted from the war. The effects of his policy, his work, can never be traced to the ultimate achievement, for they vitalise and refresh all the springs and channels of Italian energy. Only by imagining what might have ensued had Mussolini not risen as the saviour of Italy, can one arrive at even a hint of the magnitude of his performance. The same uncertainty as to what will ensue when his strong personality is removed exists in Italy to-day, as existed in England during Cromwell's reign. The great thing he has done is to cure his country of a wasting disease which

had threatened to infect every organ of the state.

The achievements of a statesman confronted by such conditions as those which confronted Cromwell cannot be set down and described as nicely rounded masterpieces, complete and integral in themselves. His work was rather that of a doctor who has re-established the mental and physical health of a patient who has been threatened by slow poisoning, and whose treatment enables the patient to recover his activity and pursue his vocations with greater efficiency and success than he possessed before his illness. But for the service of the physician, the man could have done nothing, but after that service had been performed everything the man achieved was to some extent influenced by the fact of the doctor's cure. Statesmen, benefiting by ideal conditions of national health, win records of great positive achievements, besides which the performances of Cromwell seem insignificant. For all he did was to keep a kind of peace in a distracted country, and win a real respect for England from her Continental neighbours. The glory of a stubborn defensive campaign is rarely as shining as the bright marvel of a swift, victorious assault: the positive must

always appear more attractive than the negative and neutral in achievement.

This, ultimately, is the perspective in which Cromwell must be judged. One must seek as ardently to understand the evils which he prevented from happening, as to discover the benefits which he created.

Whither led the road which Cromwell made across the morass of Stuart misunderstanding and weakness? Was it metalled with durable materials, or was it just a makeshift of duck-board? Was it strong enough to bear the heavy weight of a great nation's affairs?

Perhaps the truth is that Cromwell's section of the British Imperial road was a bridge—a bridge between the old order of monarchy and the new. A way had to be found to cross the chasm separating absolute monarchy from a wider constitutional monarchy. Cromwell was the engineer of the means by which the junction was effected, and when the nation of reactionaries and revolutionaries had crossed over, it is no real discredit to its builder that the disgruntled turned and destroyed the bridge that had made the passage possible. Perhaps it collapsed of its own weakness, but it had served its purpose in continuing a road over which there can be no going back.

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controlling and directing along sane lines the energy created by the suddenly awakened force of the consciousness of individual liberty, which shook England to its roots after the King was killed. His insistence upon tolerance, his enforcing of this quality, despite the personal dangers which his action invited, had an effect upon men that was deep and lasting. Coupled with this was his demand for liberty of conscience for all men in matters of religious beliefs and observances. He so hardened the people's will for these great spiritual possessions that not all the oppression and cruelty of the Act of Uniformity, Five Mile Act, Conventicle Act and what not of a similar character, in the way of deterrents upon individual freedom, could break the determination which Cromwell's domestic policy had nurtured in English hearts. The Stuart Restoration was even more an interregnum than the reign of Cromwell.

At a time when spiritual rights were in danger of being exalted to an irresponsible plane subversive to all sane government, a period when fanaticism was more wildly rampant than at any other crisis in history, Cromwell who stood so strongly for liberty of conscience and tolerance, held with unshakable

to the fundamental principle that in civil affairs the Government is supreme. He made it clear, both by example and precept, that obedience to the law in civil matters is paramount to good citizenship, and that the dictates of a man's conscience do not free him from that duty with impunity.

This achievement, considered in relation to the events and mental atmosphere of the period, was of immense value to future legislators and keepers of the peace.

In dealing with his performances and policy in the broader fields of Government one is tempted to stray into the domain of conjecture, but such wandering can only be of academic interest, never conclusive. What might have developed through Cromwell's foreign policy had he lived longer, or had he been succeeded by a strong man, sympathetic with it, can only be a matter of conjecture. In his less than a decade of power, his achievements in foreign policy had won for England a respect she had not enjoyed since Elizabeth's heyday. Did ever foreign minister do more in so short a time? The least that can be claimed for him is that he left, at his death, a foundation for a sound and successful policy for his successor to pursue.

He broke the naval power of Spain, gave new birth to the naval policy of Elizabeth, revived British mercantile shipping power at a time when it was dangerously threatened by the Dutch, and did more than any other ruler to establish respect and safety for Protestantism throughout the world.

Against all these achievements the stain of his Irish campaign rests inexcusable and ineffaceable. He never felt called upon to excuse himself for his actions in that unhappy country. He left, none the less, a legacy of hate towards the English which has not exhausted itself in over three centuries of time. His butcheries, deportations, dispossessions are flamingly alive in the memories of the descendants of his victims, and they have made the government of Ireland a burden and a torment to England ever since. His hatred of Roman Catholicism, his detestation of the race which massacred the Protestants in 1641, his fear of Irish support for the Royalists, all combined to make him a terrorist wherever he went in Ireland. Seeking a satisfactory explanation of his terrible aberration, one is almost forced to conclude that it was a consequence of the effects of hate and fear combined.

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Yet, at the end, searching for a just estimate of Oliver Cromwell, one can say—without ignoring either Ireland or his sanction of the illegal killing of King Charles—that he was one of the greatest Englishmen that ever served the Motherland. Through his work his memory endures.

BOOKS RECOMMENDED

- Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, by Thomas Carlyle.
Oliver Cromwell, by John Viscount Morley.
Life of Oliver Cromwell, by S. R. Gardiner : also Lives, by
Frederic Harrison, J. R. Andrews, F. Guizot, J. Allanson
Picton.
Three English Statesmen, by Goldwyn Smith.
States of the Commonwealth, by John Foster.
The English Revolution, by F. Guizot.
History of Oliver Cromwell, by S. H. Church.
Oliver Cromwell in Ireland, by Rev. Denis Murphy.
History of the Rebellion, by Edward, Earl of Clarendon.
History of His Own Time, by Bishop Burnet.
Historical Collections, by John Rushworth.
Memoirs of Cromwell, by Ludlow.
Other writers : Mark Noble, Thurloe, Bulstrode Whitelocke,
J. B. Mozley and de Retz.

PRINCIPAL DATES

- 1599 Oliver Cromwell born at Huntingdon April 25.
- 1616 Left Huntingdon Grammar School; admitted at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.
- 1617 Death of his father, Robert Cromwell.
- 1620 Married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir James Bouchier.
- 1628 M. P. for Huntingdon.
- 1629 Parliament dissolved.
- 1631 Cromwell removed from Huntingdon to St. Ives.
- 1636 Removed residence to Ely.
- 1638 Judgment against Hampden over "Ship Money."
- 1640 M. P. for Cambridge borough in Short Parliament also in Long Parliament, November 3.
- 1642 King's Charles attempt to seize the Five Members. King left Whitehall Palace: refused Parliamentary terms: set up his standard at Nottingham. Cromwell captain of a troop of horse, the Ironsides.
- 1643 Captured Lowestoft: defeated Royalists at Grantham: appointed Governor of Isle of Ely: routed Royalists at Gainsborough.
- 1644 Victories at Marston Moor and Newbury. Censured Manchester in House of Commons: urged remodelling of the army.
- 1645 Self-Denying Ordinance. New Model army raised: Cromwell appointed Lieutenant-General. Victory at Naseby. Suppression of the Clubmen. Successes at Bristol, Winchester and Basing House.

Principal Dates

- 1646 Cromwell returned to Parliament. Scots deliver King to Parliamentary Commissioners.
- 1647 Cromwell negotiates with the King unsuccessfully. King escapes, is recaptured and taken to Carisbrook.
- 1648 Crushing Royalist outbreaks in Wales, Scotland, etc. Returned to London after "Pride's Purge."
- 1649 Trial and execution of King Charles.
Cromwell appointed Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. Irish war : Drogheda, Wexford, etc.
- 1650 Cromwell leaves Ireland in Ireton's charge; returns to London. Appointed Captain-General of Commonwealth forces. Commander-in-chief in Scotland : battle of Dunbar. Edinburgh Castle surrenders.
- 1651 Victory of Worcester : end of Civil Wars.
- 1653 Expulsion of Rump Parliament. Meeting of "Little" Parliament.
- 1654 Nine months' rule by Cromwell and his Council; eighty-two Ordinances passed. First Protectorate Parliament elected under Instrument of Government.
- 1655 Parliament dissolved January 22nd. Ten Major-Generals appointed. Cromwell's intervention on behalf of persecuted Piedmontese. Blake clears Mediterranean of piracy. War with Spain, until 1658 : capture of Jamaica.
- 1656 Second Protectorate Parliament met; exclusion of members.

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- 1657 Parliament offered Cromwell royal title ; he declined.
Permitted to name successor and appoint new
House of Peers. Solemnly reinvested with
Protectorate.
- 1658 Parliament dissolved. Dunkirk transferred to British
rule.
Death of Cromwell, September 3rd.

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